LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

823
B46c
1881
v.3

F. W. Newman. Sept. 2 1882.

THE

CHAPLAIN OF THE FLEET

A Novel

BY

WALTER BESANT AND JAMES RICE

AUTHORS OF

'THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY,' 'THE MONKS OF THELEMA,' 'READY-MONEY MORTIBOY,' 'BY CELIA'S ARBOUR,' 'THIS SON OF VULCAN,' 'MY LITTLE GIRL,' 'THE CASE OF MR. LUCRAFT,' 'WITH HARP AND CROWN,' 'WHEN THE SHIP COMES HOME,' ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1881

46c
81
3

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

PART II.—*Continued.*

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVI.	HOW SPED THE MASQUERADE - - -	1
XVII.	HOW KITTY PREVENTED A DUEL - -	27
XVIII.	HOW HARRY GOT RELEASED - - -	62
XIX.	HOW WILL LEVETT WAS DISAPPOINTED -	93
XX.	HOW WILL WOULD NOT BE CROSSED - -	130
XXI.	HOW KITTY WENT TO LONDON - - -	201
XXII.	HOW LORD CHUDLEIGH RECEIVED HIS FREEDOM - - - - - -	237

THE

CHAPLAIN OF THE FLEET.

PART II.—*Continued.*

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW SPED THE MASQUERADE.

It was at this time that the company at Epsom held their masquerade, the greatest assembly of the season, to which not only the visitors at the Wells, but also the gentry from the country around, and many from London, came; so that the inns and lodging-houses overflowed, and some were fain to be content to find a bed over shops and in the mean houses of the lower sort. Nay, there were even many who put up tents on the Downs, and slept in them like soldiers on a campaign.

At other times my head would have been full of the coming festivity, but the confession of my lord and the uncertainty into which it threw my spirits, prevented my paying that attention to the subject which its importance demanded.

'Kitty,' cried Nancy, 'I have talked to you for half an hour, and you have not heard one word. Oh, how a girl is spoiled the moment she falls in love! Don't start, my dear, nor blush, unless you like, because there is no one here but ourselves. As for that, all the place knows that you and Lord Chudleigh are in love with each other, though Peggy Baker will have it that it is mostly on one side. "My dear," she said at the book-shop yesterday, "the woman shows her passion in a manner which makes a heart of sensibility blush for her sex." Don't get angry, Kitty, because I was there, and set her down as she deserved. "Dear me!" I said, "we have not all of us the sensibility of Miss Peggy Baker, who, if all reports are true, has had time to get over the passion she once exhibited for the handsome Lord Chudleigh." Why, my dear, how can any-

one help seeing that the women are monstrous jealous, and my lord in so deep a quagmire of love, that nothing but the marriage-ring (which cures the worst cases) can pull him out ?'

I had, in verity, been thinking over my troubles, while Nancy was thinking over her frocks. Now I roused myself and listened.

'My mother will go as the Queen of Sheba. She will wear a train over her hoop, a paper crown, a sceptre, and have two black boys to walk behind her. That will show who she is. I am to go as Joan of Arc, with a sword in my hand, but not to wear it dangling at my side, lest it cause me to fall down: Peggy Baker will be Venus, the Goddess of Love. She will have a golden belt, and a little Cupid is to follow her with bow and arrows, which he is to shoot, or pretend to shoot, at the company. She will sprawl and languish in her most bewitching manner, the dear creature; but since she has failed with Lord Eardisley there is nobody at Epsom good enough for her. I hear she goes very shortly to Bath, where no doubt she will catch a nabob. I hope his liver and temper will be good. Oh ! and Mr. Stalla-

bras will go as a Greek pastoral poet, Theo, something—I forget his name—with a lyre in one hand and a shepherd's crook in the other. Harry Temple is to go as Vulcan: you will know him by his limp and by the hammer upon his shoulder. Sir Miles wants to go as the God of Cards, but no one seems to know who that deity was. My father says he shall go as a plain English country gentleman, because he sees so few among the company that the sight may do them good.'

I was going as the Goddess of Night, because I wanted to have an excuse for wearing a domino all the evening, most of the ladies throwing them aside early in the night. My dress was a long black velvet hood, covering me from head to foot, without hoops, and my hair dressed low, so that the hood could cover the head and be even pulled down over the face. At first I wanted my lord to find out by himself the *incognita* who had resolved to address him; but he asked me to tell him beforehand, and to be sure I could refuse him nothing.

The splendour of the lights was even greater than that at Lord Chudleigh's enter-

tainment, when he lit up the lawn among the trees with coloured oil lamps. Yet the scene lacked the awful contrast of the dark and gloomy wood behind, in which, as one retired to talk, the music seemed out of place, and the laughter of the gay throng impertinent. Here was there no dark wood or shade of venerable trees to distract the thoughts from the gaiety of the moment, or sadden by a contrast of the long-lived forest with the transitory crowd who danced beneath the branches, as careless as a cloud of midges on the river-bank, born to buzz away their little hour, know hope, fear, and love, feel pain, be cut off prematurely at their twentieth minute, or wear on to a green old age and die at the protracted term of sixty minutes.

The Terrace and the New Parade were hung with festoons of coloured lamps. There must have been thousands of them in graceful arches from branch to branch : the doors of the Assembly Rooms had columns and arches of coloured lamps set up beside and over them : there were porches of coloured lamps : a temple of coloured lamps beside the watch-house at the edge of the pond, where horns

were stationed to play while the music rested: in the Rooms was, of course, to be dancing: and, which was the greatest attraction, there were amusements of various kinds, almost as if one was at a country fair, without the crowding of the rustics, the fighting with quarterstaves, the grinning through horse-collars, the climbing of greasy poles, and the shouting. I have always, since that evening, longed for the impossible, namely, a country fair without the country people. Why can we not have, all to ourselves, and away from a noisy mob of ill-bred and rough people, the amusements of the fair, the stalls with the gingerbread, Richardson's Theatre with a piece addressed to eyes and ears of sensibility, a wax-work, dancing and riding people, and clowns?

Here the presenters of the masquerade had not, it is true, provided all these amusements; but there were some: an Italian came to exhibit dancing puppets, called *fantoccini;* a conjurer promised to perform tricks and swallow red-hot coals, which is truly a most wonderful feat, and makes one believe in the power of magic, else how

could the tender throat sustain the violence of the fire? a girl was to dance upon the tight-rope: and a sorcerer or magician or astrologer was to be seated in a grotto to tell the fortunes of all who chose to search into the future.

Nothing could be gayer or more beautiful than the assemblage gathered together beneath these lighted lamps or in the Assembly Rooms in the evening. Mrs. Esther was the only lady without some disguise; Sir Robert, whose dress has been already sufficiently indicated, gave her his arm for the evening. All the dresses were as Nancy told me. I knew Venus by her golden cestus and her Cupid armed (he was, indeed, the milk-boy); and beneath the domino I could guess, without having been told, that no other than Peggy Baker swam and languished. Surely it is great presumption for a woman to call herself the Goddess of Beauty. Harry Temple was fine as Vulcan, though he generally forgot to go lame: he bore a real blacksmith's hammer on his shoulder; but I am certain that Vulcan never wore so modish a wig with so gallant a tie behind. And his scowls,

meant for me, were not out of keeping with his character. Nancy Levett was the sweetest Joan of Arc ever seen, and skipped about to the admiration of everybody, with a cuirass and a sword, although the real Joan, who was, I believe, a village maid, probably wore a stuff frock instead of Nancy's silk, and I dare say hoops were not in fashion in her days. Nor would she have lace mittens or silk shoes, but bare hands and wooden sandals. Nor would she powder her hair and dress it up two feet high, but rather wear it plain, blown about by the winds, washed by the rain, and curling as nature pleased. As for Mr. Stallabras, it did one good to see him as Theocritus, nose in air, shepherd's crook on shoulder, lyre in hand, in a splendid purple coat and wig newly combed and tied behind, illustrating the dignity and grandeur of genius. The Queen of Sheba's black pages (they were a loan from a lady in London) attracted general attention. You knew her for a queen by her crown. There were, however, other queens, all of whom wore crowns; and it was difficult sometimes to know which queen was designed if you failed to notice the symbol which dis-

tinguished one from the other. Thus Queen Elizabeth of England, who bore on a little flag the motto '*Dux fœmina facti*,' was greatly indignant when Harry Temple mistook her for Cleopatra, whose asp was for the moment hidden. Yet so good a scholar ought to have known, because Cleopatra ran away at Actium, and therefore could not carry such a motto, while Elizabeth conquered in the Channel. Then it was hard at first sight to distinguish between Julius Cæsar, Hannibal, Timour the Tartar, Luther, Alfred, and Caractacus, because they were all dressed very much alike, save that Luther carried a book, Alfred a sceptre, Cæsar a short sword, Timour a pike, Hannibal a marshal's *bâton*, and Caractacus a bludgeon. The difficulties and mistakes, however, mattered little, because, when the first excitement of guessing a character was over, one forgot about the masquerade and remembered the ball. Yet it was vexatious when a man had dressed carefully for, say Charles the First, to be mistaken for Don Quixote or Euripides, who wore the same wigs.

I say nothing of the grotesque dresses with masks and artificial heads, introduced by

some of the young Templars. They amused, as such things do, for a while, and until one became accustomed to them. Then their pranks ceased to amuse. It is a power peculiar to man that he can continue to laugh at horse-play, buffoonery, and low humour for hours, while a woman is content to laugh for five minutes, if she laughs at all. I believe that the admirers of those coarse and unfeeling books, 'Tom Jones' and 'Humphrey Clinker,' are entirely men.

All the ladies began by wearing masks, and a few of the men. One of them personated a shepherd in lamentation for the loss of his mistress; that is to say, he wore ribbons of black and crimson tied in bows about his sleeve, and carried a pastoral hook decorated with the same colours. In this character some of the company easily recognised Lord Chudleigh; and when he led out for the first minuet a tall, hooded figure, in black velvet, some thought they recognised Kitty Pleydell.

'But why is he in mourning?' asked Peggy Baker, who understood what was meant. 'She cannot have denied him. He must have another mistress for whom he

has put on the black ribbons. Poor Kitty! we are all of us sorry for her. Yet pride still goes before a fall.'

No one knew what was meant except Lord Chudleigh's partner, the figure in black velvet.

'I suppose,' continued Peggy, alluding to the absence of my hoops, 'that she wants to show how a woman would look without the aid of art. I call it, for my part, odious!'

After the minuet we left the dancers and walked beneath the lighted lamps on the Terrace. Presently the music ceased for a while, and the horns outside began to play.

'Kitty,' whispered my lord, 'you used strange words the other night. Were they anything but a kind hope for the impossible? Could they mean anything beyond an attempt to console a despairing man?'

'No,' I replied. 'They were more than a hope. But as yet I cannot say more. Oh, my lord! let me enjoy a brief hour of happiness, if it should die away and come to nothing.'

I have said that part of the entertainment was a magician's cave. We found ourselves

opposite the entrance of this place. People were going in and coming out—or, more correctly, people were waiting outside for their turn to go in; and those who came out appeared either elated beyond measure with the prophecies they had heard, or depressed beyond measure. Some of the girls had tears in their eyes—they were those to whom he had denied a lover; some came out bounding and leaping with joy—they were the maidens to whom he had promised a husband and children dear. Some of the young men came out with head erect and smiling lips: I suppose the wizard had told them of fortune, honour, long life, health and love—things which every young man must greatly desire. Some came out with angry frowns and lips set sternly, as if resolved to meet adverse fortune with undaunted courage—which is, of course, the only true method. But I fear the evening's happiness was destroyed for these luckless swains and nymphs: the lamps would grow dim, the music lose its gladness, the wine its sparkle.

'Let us, my lord,' I said, little thinking of what was to happen within the cave—

'Let us, too, consult the oracle, and learn the future.'

At first he refused, saying, gravely, that to inquire of wise men or wise women was the sin of Saul with the witch of Endor: that whatever might have happened in olden time, as in the case of the Delphic oracles or the High Places, where they came to inquire of Baal or Moloch, there was now no voice from the outer world nor any communication from the stars, or from good spirits or from evil.

'Therefore,' he said, 'we waste our time, sweet Kitty, in idly asking questions of this man, who knows no more than we know ourselves.'

'Then,' I asked, 'let us go in curiosity, because I have never seen a wizard, and I know not what he is like. You, I am sure, will keep me safe from harm, whatever frightful creature he may be.'

So without thinking I led the way to the Wizard's Cave.

It stood in the Parade, beneath the trees; at the door were assembled a crowd of the masqueraders, either waiting their turn or discussing the reply of the oracle; the en-

trance, before which was a heavy curtain, double, was guarded by a negro, armed with an immense cutlass, which he ever and anon whirled round his head, the light falling on the bright steel, so that it seemed like a ring of fire, behind which gleamed his two eyes, as bright as a panther's eyes, and his teeth, as white as polished ivory. The sight of him made some of the women retreat, and refuse to go in at all.

The wise man received only one couple at a time: but when the pair then with him emerged, the negro stepped forward and beckoned to us, though it was not our turn to enter the cave. I observed that the last pair came out with downcast eyes. I think I am as free from superstition as any woman, yet I needs must remark, in spite of my lord's disbelief in magic or astrology, that the unhappy young man whose fortune this wizard told (an evil fortune, as was apparent from his face) ran away with the girl who was with him (an honest city merchant's daughter), and having got through his whole stock, took to road, and was presently caught, tried, sentenced, and hanged in chains on Bag-

shot Heath, where those who please may go and see him. With such examples before one it is hard not to believe in the conjurer and the wise woman, just as a thousand instances might be alleged from any woman's experience to prove that it is unlucky to spill salt (without throwing some over your left shoulder), or to dream of crying children, or to cross two knives upon a plate—with many other things which are better not learned, would one wish to live a tranquil life.

What they called the Wizard's Cave was a little building constructed specially for the occasion, of rude trunks of trees, laid one upon the other, the interstices filled up with moss, to imitate a hermitage or monkish cell; a gloomy abode, consecrated to superstition and horrid rites. The roof seemed to be made of thatch, but I think that was only an illusion produced by the red light of an oil-lamp, which hung in the middle, and gave a soft and flickering, yet lurid light, around the hut. There also hung up beside the lamp, and on the right hand, the skin of a grisly crocodile, stuffed, the sight of which filled me with a dreadful apprehension, and made me, ever

after, reflect on the signal advantages possessed by those who dwell in a land where such monsters are unknown. A table stood in the middle, on which, to my horror, were three grinning skulls in a row; and in each they had placed a lamp of different colours, so that through the eye-holes of one there came a green, of another a red, and of the third a blue light, very horrible and diabolical to behold.

There was also a great book—doubtless the book of Fate—upon the table. Behind it sat the Sage himself. He was a man with a big head covered with grey hair, which hung down upon his shoulders long and unkempt, and with a tall mitre, which had mysterious characters engraved over it, and between the letters what seemed in the dim light to be flames and devils—the fit occupant of this abominable place. He wore spectacles and a great Turkish beard, frightful and Saracenic of aspect.

I thought of the witch of Endor, of those who practised divinations, and of the idolatrous practices on High Places and in groves, and I trembled lest the fate of the Prophets

of Baal might also be that of the profane inquirers. Outside, the music played and the couples were dancing.

The Wizard looked up as we stood before him. Behind the blue spectacles and the great beard, even in the enormous head, I recognised nothing and suspected nothing; but when he spoke, and in deep sonorous tones called my companion by his name:——

'Lord Chudleigh, what wilt thou inquire of the oracle?'——

Then indeed I turned giddy and faint, and should have fallen, but my lord caught me by the waist.

'Be soothed, Kitty,' he whispered. 'Here is nothing to fright us but the mummery of a foolish masquerade or the roguery of a rascal quack. Calm yourself.'

Alas! I feared no more the crocodile, nor the horrid death's heads, nor the Turkish beard, nor the mitre painted with devils—if they were devils. They disquieted me at first sight, it is true: but now was I in deadly terror, for I knew and feared the voice. It was no other than the voice of the Doctor,

the Chaplain of the Fleet. For what trouble, what mischief, was he here?

Then I recovered, saying to myself: 'Kitty, be firm. Resolve by neither act nor word to do harm to thy lover. Consent not to any snare. Be resolute and alert.'

Lord Chudleigh, seeing me thus composed, stepped forward to the table and said:

'Sir Magician, Wizard, Conjurer, or whatever name best befits you, for you and your pretended science I care not one jot, nor do I believe but that it is imposture and falsehood. Perhaps, however, you are but acting a part in the masquerade. But the young lady hath a desire to see what you do, and to ask you a question or two.'

'Your lordship must own that I know your name, in spite of your domino.'

'Tut, tut! everybody here knows my name, whether I wear a domino or take it off. That is nothing. You are probably one of the company in disguise.'

'You doubt my power? Then, without your leave, my lord, permit me to tell you a secret known to me, yourself, and one or two others only. It is a secret which no one has

yet whispered about; none of the company at the Wells know it; it is a great secret: an important secret'—all this time his voice kept growing deeper and deeper. 'It is a secret of the darkest. Stay—this young lady, I think, knows it.'

'For Heaven's sake——' I cried, but was interrupted by my lord.

'Tell me your secret,' he said calmly. 'Let us know this wonderful secret.'

The Doctor leaned forward over the table and whispered in his ear a few words. Lord Chudleigh started back and gazed at him with dismay.

'So!' he cried; 'it is already becoming town talk, is it?'

The Magician shook his head.

'Not so, my lord. No one knows it yet except the persons concerned in it. No one will ever know it if your lordship so pleases. I told you but to show the power of the Black Art.'

'I wonder, then, how you know.'

'The Wizard, by his Art, learns as much of the past as he desires to know; he reads

the present around him, still by aid of this great Art; he can foretell the future, not by the gift of prophecy, but by studying the stars.'

'Tell me, then,' said Lord Chudleigh, as if in desperation, 'the future. Yet this is idle folly and imposture.'

'That which is done'—the Sage opened the book and turned over the pages, speaking in low, deep tones—'cannot be undone, whatever your lordship might ignorantly wish. That which is loved may still be loved. That which is hoped may yet come to pass.'

'Is that all you have to say to me?'

'Is it not enough, my lord? Would any king's counsel or learned serjeant give you greater comfort? Good-night. Leave, now, this young lady with me, alone.'

'First read me the oracle of her future, as you have told me mine; though still, I say, this is folly and imposture.'

The Magician gravely turned over his pages, without resenting this imputation, and read, or seemed to read:

'Love shall arise from ashes of buried scorn :
Joy from a hate in a summer morning born :
When heart with heart and pulse with pulse shall beat,
Farewell to the pain of the storm and the fear of the Fleet.'

'Good heavens!' cried Lord Chudleigh, pressing his hand to his forehead. 'Am I dreaming? Are we mad?'

'Now, my lord,' said the pretended wizard, 'go to the door; leave this young lady with me. I have more to tell her for her own ears. She is quite safe. She is not the least afraid. At the smallest fright she will cry aloud for your help. You will remain without the door, within earshot.'

'Yes,' I murmured, terrified, yet resolute. 'Leave me a few moments alone. Let me hear what he has to say to me.'

Then my lord left me alone with the Doctor.

When the heavy curtain fell before the door, the Wizard took off the great mitre and laughed silently and long, though I felt no cause for merriment.

'Confess, child,' he said, 'that I am an oracle of Dodona, a sacred oak. Lord Chudleigh is well and properly deceived. But we

have little time for speech. I came here, Kitty, to see you, and no one else. By special messengers and information gained from letters, I learned, as I wrote to you (to my great joy), that this young lord is deeply enamoured. You are already, it is true, in some sort—nay, in reality, his bride, though he knows it not. Yet I might waive my own dignity in the matter, for the sake of thy happiness; and, if you like to wed him, why, nothing is easier than to let him know that his Fleet wife is dead. They die of drink daily. Roger, my man, will swear what I tell him to swear. This I have the less compunction in persuading him to do, because, in consequence of his horrid thieving, robbing, fighting, and blaspheming, his soul is already irretrievably lost, his conscience seared with a hot iron, and his heart impenitent as the nether millstone. Also the evidence of the marriage, the register, is in my hands, and may be kept or destroyed, as I please. Therefore it matters nothing what this rogue may swear. I think, child, the best thing would be to accept my Lord's proposals; to let him know, through me, that his former wife,

whose name he knows not, is dead; he may be told, so that he may remain ashamed of himself, and anxious to bury the thing in silence, that she died of gin. He would then be free to marry you; and, should he not redeem his promise and give you honourable marriage, it will be time to reduce him to submission—with the register.'

Shall I confess that, at the first blush, this proposal was welcome to me? It seemed so easy a relief from all our troubles. The supposed death of his wife, the destruction of the register—what could be better?

'Be under no fear,' continued the Doctor, 'of my fellow Roger. He dares not speak. By Heaven! I have plenty to hang him with a dozen times over, if I wished. He would murder me, if he dared, and would carry me up to Holborn Bridge, where I could be safely dropped into the Fleet Ditch; but he dares not try. Why, if he proclaimed this marriage on Fleet Bridge (but that he dares not do), no one would believe it on his word, such a reputation has he, while I have the register safely locked up. Whereas, did they come forward to give evidence for

me, at my bidding, so clear is my case, and so abundant my proofs, that no counsel could shake them.'

This speech afforded me a little space wherein to collect my thoughts. Love makes a woman strong. Time was when I should have trembled before the Doctor's eyes, and obeyed him in the least particular. But now I had to consider another beside myself.

What I thought was this. Suppose the plot carried out, and myself married to my lord again. There would be this dreadful story on my mind. I should not dare to own my relationship with this famous Doctor; I should be afraid lest my husband should find it out. I should be afraid of his getting on the scent, as children say; therefore I should be obliged to hide all that part of my life which was spent in the Fleet. Yet there were many persons—Mrs. Esther, Sir Miles, Solomon Stallabras, beside my uncle—who knew all of it, except that one story. Why, any day, any moment, a chance word, an idle recollection, might make my husband suspicious and jealous. Then farewell to all my happiness! Better none at all,

than to have it snatched from me in that way.

'There is a second plan,' he went on. 'We may tell him exactly who and what you are.'

'Oh, sir!' I cried, 'do nothing yet. Leave it all with me for a little—I beg, I implore you! I love him, and he loves me. Should I harm him, therefore, by deceiving him and marrying him, while I hid the shameful story of the past? You cannot ask me to do that. I will not do it. And should you, against my will, acquaint him with what has happened, I swear that, out of the love I bear him, I will refuse and deny all your allegations—yea, the very fact itself, with the register and the evidence of those two rogues. Sir, which would the court believe? the daughter of the Rev. Lawrence Pleydell, or the rascal runner of a—of yourself?'

He said nothing. He looked surprised.

'No,' I went on; 'I will have no more deception. Every day I suffer remorse from my sin. There shall be no more. My mind, sir, is made up. I will confess to him everything. Not to-night; I cannot, to-night. And then, if he sends me away with hatred,

I will never—never—stand in his way; I will be as one dead.'

'This,' said the Doctor, 'it is to be young and to be in love. I was once like that myself. Go, child; thou shalt hear from me again.'

He put on his mitre and beckoned me to the door. I went out without another word. Without stood a crowd, including Peggy Baker.

'Oh!' she cried. 'She looks frightened, yet exulting. Dear Miss Pleydell, I hope he prophesied great things for you! A title perhaps, an estate in the country, a young and handsome lover, as generous as he is constant. But we know the course of true love never——'

Here my lord took my hand and led me away from the throng. Another pair went in, and the great negro before the door began again to flash his cutlass in the lights, to show his white teeth, and to turn those white eyes about which looked so fierce and terrible.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW KITTY PREVENTED A DUEL.

The agitation of spirits into which I was thrown by this interview with the doctor, blinded me for the moment to the fact that Harry Temple, of whose pretensions I thought I had disposed, was still an angry and rejected suitor. Indeed, for a few days he had ceased to persecute me. But to-night he manifested a jealousy which was inexcusable, after all I had said to him. No one, as I had gone so far as almost to explain to him, had a better right to give me his hand for the evening than my lord; yet this young man, as jealous as the blacksmith god whom he personated, must needs cross our steps at every turn, throwing angry glances both upon me and my partner. He danced with

no one; he threw away his hammer, left off limping, consorted with none of the gay company, but nursed his wrath in silence.

Now the last dance of the evening, which took place at two o'clock in the morning, was to be one in which all the ladies threw their fans upon the table, and the gentlemen danced each with her whose fan he picked from the pile. My lord whispered to me that I was first to let him see my fan, whereupon, when the fans lay upon the table, he deliberately chose my own and brought it to me.

I took off my domino, which was now useless, because all the company knew the disguise. Everybody laughed, and we took our places to lead off the country-dance.

It was three o'clock when we finished dancing and prepared to go home.

Harry Temple here came up to me and asked if he might have the honour of escorting me to my lodgings. I answered that I had already promised that favour to Lord Chudleigh.

'Every dance, the whole evening: the supper, the promenade: all given to this happy gentleman! Surely, Kitty, the Queen

of the Wells might dispense her favours more generously.'

'The Queen,' said Lord Chudleigh, 'is the fountain of honour. We have only to accept and be grateful.'

I laughed and bade Harry good-night, and offered him my hand, which he refused sullenly; and murmuring something about pride and old friends, turned aside and let us go.

Everybody, it seems, noticed the black looks of Harry Temple all the evening, and expected, though in my happiness I thought not of such a thing, that high words would pass between this sulky young gentleman and his favoured rival, to whom he was so rude and unmannerly. Now, by the laws of the Wells, as laid down strictly in the rules of the great Mr. Nash for Tunbridge Wells and Bath, and adopted at all watering-places, the gentlemen wore no swords on the Parade and in the card-rooms; yet was it impossible to prevent altogether the quarrels of hot-blooded men, and the green grass of the Downs had been stained with the blood of more than one poor fellow, run through as

the consequence of a foolish brawl. When will men cease to fight duels, and seek to kill each other for a trifling disagreement, or a quarrel?

Generally, it takes two to make a quarrel, and few men are so perverse as deliberately to force a duel upon another against his will. Yet this was what Harry Temple, my old schoolfellow, my old friend, of whom I once held so high an opinion, so great a respect, actually did with Lord Chudleigh. He forced the quarrel upon him. My lord was always a gentleman of singular patience, forbearance, and sweetness, and one who would take, unprovoked, a great deal of provocation, never showing the usual sign of resentment or anger, although he might be forced to take up the quarrel. He held, indeed, the maxim that a man should always think so well of himself as to make an insult impossible, unless it be deliberate, open, and clearly intended. As for his courage, he went on to say that it was a matter of self-respect: if a man's own conscience approve (which is the ultimate judge for all but those whose consciences are deadened by an evil life), let

him fear not what men say, knowing full well that if they dare say more than the customs of the polite world allow, it is easy for every man to prove that he is no coward.

Lord Chudleigh, then, having led us to the door of our own lodging, unfortunately returned to the Assembly Rooms, where—and outside upon the Terrace—some of the gentlemen yet lingered. I say unfortunately, because, as for what followed, I cannot believe but that poor Harry, whose disposition was not naturally quarrelsome, might have been inflamed by drinking wine with them when he ought to have gone to bed. Now wine, to one who is jealous, is like oil upon fire. And had my lord, for his part, retired to Durdans —as he might very properly have done, seeing the lateness of the hour—the morning's reflection would, I am sure, have persuaded Harry that he had been a fool, and had no reasonable ground for quarrel with his lordship or with me.

The sun was already rising, for it was nearly four o'clock in the morning; the ladies were all gone off to bed; those who lay about the benches yawned and stretched

themselves; some were for bed, some for another bottle; some were talking of an early gallop on the Downs; the lamps yet glimmered in their sockets; the Terrace looked, with its oil lamps still burning in the brightness of the morning sunshine, with the odds and ends of finery, the tattered bravery of torn dresses, gold and silver lace, tinfoil, broken paper crowns and helmets, as sad as a theatre the morning after a performance; the stalls of the Wizard, the Italian performers, and the dancing girl, were empty and open; their hangings were already torn down, the stand for the horses beside the pond was broken in parts.

When Lord Chudleigh came back he found waiting for him, among the latest of the revellers, Harry Temple, his face pale, his lips set, his manner agitated, as of one who contemplates a rash act.

My lord threw himself upon a bench under the trees, his head upon his hand, pensive, thinking to calm the agitation of his spirits by the freshness of the morning air. Harry began walking up and down in front of him, casting angry glances at him, but as yet

speaking not. Now, within the deserted card-room when the lights had all burned out, and the windows were wide open, sat all by himself Sir Miles Lackington, turning over a pack of cards at one of the empty tables, and thinking over the last night's play, at which he had won some money, and regretted to have been stopped just when he was in luck. There were now only a few gentlemen left, and these were one by one dropping off.

Presently, with an effort, Harry Temple stopped in front of his lordship and spoke to him.

I declare that up to this time poor Harry had always been the most peaceful of creatures, though strong, and well accustomed to hold bouts with Will, in which he proved almost equal to that stalwart competitor, at wrestling, singlestick, quarterstaff, or boxing. Also, as was proved by the affray of the Saturday evening, already related, not unready on occasion. But a bookish youth, and not one who sought to fix quarrels upon any man, or to commit murder in the name of honour. And this shows how dangerous a

passion is thwarted love, which can produce in a peaceful man's bosom jealousy, hatred, rage, and forgetfulness of that most sacred commandment which enjoins us not to slay.

'I trust, my lord,' he said, laughing and blushing, as if uncertain of himself, 'that your lordship hath passed a pleasant evening with the Queen of the Wells.'

Lord Chudleigh looked up surprised. Then he rose, for there was a look in Harry's eyes which meant mischief. The unlucky love-sick swain went on:

'Lord Chudleigh and Miss Kitty Pleydell. The very names seem made for one another; no doubt his lordship is as fine a gentleman as the lady is beautiful.'

'Sir!' said Lord Chudleigh, quietly, 'you have perhaps been drinking. This is the only excuse for such an association of my name with that young lady's in a public assembly.'

'Oh!' he said, 'I want no excuse for addressing your lordship. The Temples were gentlefolk before the Chudleighs were heard of.'

'Well, Mr. Temple, so be it. Enjoy that

superiority. Shall we close this discussion ?'

'No, my lord ; there is more to be said.'

He spoke hotly, and with an anger which ought surely to have been simulated, such small provocation as he had received.

'Then, sir, in Heaven's name let us say it and have done with it.'

'You have offended me, my lord—you best know how.'

'I believe I know, Mr. Temple. You also know what grounds you have for believing that to be an offence.'

'I say, my lord,' his voice rose and his eyes flashed, 'that you have offended me.'

'Had I done so wittingly,' returned Lord Chudleigh, 'I should willingly ask pardon. But I deny your right to take offence.'

'You have offended me highly,' he repeated, 'and that in a manner which makes an apology only a deeper insult. You have offended me in a manner which only one thing can satisfy.'

'Before we go any farther, Mr. Temple,' said my lord, sitting down again calmly and without heat, 'I would know exactly the

nature of my offence, and your reasonable right to regard it as such.'

'It needs not, my lord. You know well enough what I mean.'

'I know that, of course. I would wish to know, as well, your right to be offended.'

'I say, my lord, that it is enough.'

Harry, being in the wrong, spoke still more loudly, and those who were left drew near to see the quarrel.

'You need not raise your voice, sir,' said Lord Chudleigh; 'I like any altercation in which I may be unhappily engaged to be conducted like the rest of my business in life, namely, with the decorum and quietness which become gentlemen like the Temples, and those of that younger family the Chudleighs. You have, I believe, travelled. You have therefore, without doubt, had opportunities of observing the well-bred and charming quietness with which gentlemen in France arrange these little matters, particularly when, as now, the dispute threatens to involve the name of a lady. Now, sir, that we understand each other, I must inform you that unless I know the exact nature of

my offence to you, which I have the right to demand, this affair will proceed no farther. I would as soon accept a quarrel from a mad Malay running amuck at all he meets.'

'My lord!' cried Harry, with red face and trembling fingers.

'Of course I do not pretend to be unable to form a guess,' Lord Chudleigh went on gravely; 'but I must beg you to instruct me exactly what you mean. You will observe, sir, that I am here, as a visitor, previously unknown to yourself. It is therefore strange to learn that one has offended a gentleman towards whom my behaviour has been neither less nor more guarded than towards others.'

'My lord, you have offended me by the attentions you have paid to a young lady.'

'Indeed, sir! So I believed. But permit me to ask if the young lady is connected with you or with your house by any ties of relationship or otherwise?'

'She is not, my lord.'

'Further: have you any right of guardianship over this young lady?'

'None, my lord. But yet you have offended me.'

'The young lady is free to accept the attention of any man she may prefer; to show her preference as openly as she considers proper. I conclude this to be the case. And, if so, I am unable to perceive in what way I can wilfully have offended you.'

'Your lordship,' said Harry Temple, enraged by his adversary's calmness, but yet with sufficient self-command to speak in lower tones, 'has offended me in this: that if you had not paid those attentions to Miss Pleydell, she might have accepted those courtesies which I was prepared to offer her.'

'Indeed, sir! that is a circumstance with which I am wholly unconcerned. No doubt the same thing might be said by other gentlemen in this company.'

'I knew that young lady, my lord, long before you did. It was my deliberate purpose, long ago, to make her my wife when the opportunity arrived——'

'The time has come,' resumed Lord Chudleigh, 'but not the man——'

'I say, it was my fixed intention to marry Miss Pleydell. I did not, my lord, form these resolutions lightly, nor abandon them without sufficient reason. It is still my resolution. I say that you shall not stand between me and my future wife!'

'Indeed! But suppose Miss Pleydell refuses to give her consent to this arrangement? Surely such a resolve, however laudable, demands the consent of the other party.'

'Miss Pleydell will not refuse my hand when you have left her. Abandon a field, my lord, which never belonged to yourself——'

'Tut, tut!' said Lord Chudleigh. 'This, sir, is idle talk. You cannot seriously imagine——'

'I seriously imagine that, if necessary, I will make my way to that young lady over your lordship's body, if you stand in my way.'

Lord Chudleigh took off his hat and bowed low.

'Then, sir, the sooner you take the first step in the pursuance of your resolution the

better. I will bar your way upon the Downs at any time you may appoint.'

Harry returned the obeisance.

'I wait your lordship's convenience,' he said.

'My convenience shall be yours, Mr. Temple. For it is you who desire to run me through, not I you. Have your own way.'

'It is late to-night,' said Harry, now quite calm, though with a hot flush upon his cheek. 'Your lordship would like to rest. Perhaps to-morrow, after breakfast, while the ladies are at morning prayer.'

Oh, the bloodthirsty wretch!

Lord Chudleigh bowed again.

'That time, Mr. Temple, will I dare say suit the convenience of my second.'

The code of honour, be it observed, does not allow the exhibition of any emotion of horror, remorse, or repugnance, when you arrange to commit that private murder which gentlemen call a duel.

Lord Chudleigh bowed once more, and left his adversary. He walked across the terrace to the card-room, where Sir Miles was alone with the scattered packs of cards. When he came out, he bowed a third time, and walked

slowly away. I hope that, in his own chamber, he reflected on the wickedness of the appointment he had made, and on its possible consequences.

Sir Miles threw away the cards, and came out rubbing his eyes.

'Ods my life, sir!' he said, addressing Harry Temple, who, now that the mischief was done, looked somewhat sheepish, though dignified.

The few gentlemen who were left drew nearer, anxious to lose nothing of what might happen. English people of all ranks love above all things to watch a quarrel or a fight, whatever be the weapons.

'Ods my life, sir!' repeated Sir Miles. 'This is a pretty kettle of fish! Here we have all spent a pleasant night—dancing, playing, and making love, everyone happy, even though some gentlemen did lose their mistresses or their money, and here you spoil sport by quarrelling at the end of it. What the Devil, sir, does it concern you whether my lord talks gallantry with one young lady or another?'

'That, Sir Miles, allow me to tell you, is

my business. If you are his lordship's second, let us arrange accordingly. If a principal, let us fight afterwards.'

'No, sir,' replied the baronet. 'It is everybody's business. It concerns the cheerfulness, the security, the happiness of all this honourable company. What! if I amuse myself, and a young lady too, by writing poems on her dainty fingers, must I needs go out and measure swords with every young hot-head who would fain be doing the same? Seconds and principals? Have we nothing to do but to fight duels? Mr. Temple, I thought better things from a gentleman of your rank and family. What! any jackanapes lawyer —any pert young haberdasher—might think it fine thus to insult and challenge a harmless nobleman of great name and excellent qualities! But for *you*, Mr. Temple! you, sir, a gentleman of your county, and of an ancient and most honourable stock——Fie, sir, fie!'

'I think, Sir Miles,' said Harry, who wished now to have the preliminaries settled without more ado, 'that things having so far advanced, these reproaches may be spared Let us proceed to business.'

'A girl can choose, I suppose,' Sir Miles went on, 'without the interference or the objection of a man who is neither her father, her guardian, her brother, nor her cousin? Why, as for this young lady, whose name, I say, it is not respectful to name in this business—I myself, sir, I myself paid her attentions till she bade me go about my business. What, sir! do you think I should have suffered any man to question my right to make a Lady Lackington where I chose, and where I could! She laughed in my face. Mighty pretty laughing lips she has, and teeth as white as pearls; and a roguish eye when she chooses, for all she goes so grave. Did I, then, go snivelling in the dumps? Did I take it ill that she showed a liking for Lord Chudleigh, who is worth ten of me, and a dozen of you? Did I hang my chops and wipe my eyes? Did I, therefore, insult his lordship, and call him out?'

'All this, Sir Miles,' Harry replied impatiently, 'has nothing to do with the question which lies between Lord Chudleigh and myself.'

'What I argued, for my own comfort,

when sweet Kitty said me nay, was this: that the marriage condition hath many drawbacks, as is abundantly evident from history and poetry, while freedom hath many sweets—that a man may tire of a Beauty and a Toast in a month, but he never tires of liberty—that children often come after matrimony, and they are expensive—that, as for the lady's good looks, why, as many pretty women are in the sea as ever came out of it. And as for my wounded feelings, why, what is it but so much vanity? Granted that she is the Toast this year: prithee who will be the Toast next? Last year, they tell me, it was Peggy Baker—and a monstrous pretty woman, too, though not to compare with Kitty. Now her nose is out of joint. Who next? Some little miss now getting rapped over the knuckles in the nursery, Mr. Temple; and she will be, in her turn, quite as fine a woman as we shall live to see. That is to say, as I shall live to see, because you, of course, will be no more. At eleven o'clock upon the Downs you will get your quietus; when my lord's sword has once made daylight through your fine waistcoat. 'Tis pity,

but yet what help? Mighty little looking after pretty women where you are going to, Mr. Temple. I advise you to consider your earthly concerns before you go out. Well, 'tis a shame, it is, a well-set-up man like you, with a likely face and pretty fortune, to throw all away because a woman says nay :

> ' "Shall I, wasting in despair,
> Die because a woman's fair?"

Tilly vally! A pretty reason why two tall fellows should stick swords into each other. I have a great mind, sir, not to allow my principal to go out on such a provocation.'

'I can easily give him more, Sir Miles,' said Harry, hotly, 'or you either, as soon as you have finished your sermon.'

'Oh, sir!' Sir Miles laughed and bowed. 'Pray do not think that I desire to fight on that or any other provocation. We gentlemen of Norfolk sometimes try conclusions with the cudgel before the rapier comes into play. Therefore, sir, having given you my mind on the matter, and having nothing more to say at this moment, you may as well refer me at once to your friend.'

Harry turned to the group of lookers-on.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'an unhappy difference, as some of you have witnessed, has arisen between the Lord Chudleigh and myself. May I request the good offices of one among you in this affair?'

One of them, an officer in the king's scarlet, stepped forward and offered his services. Harry thanked him, briefly told him where he lodged, introduced him formally to Sir Miles, and walked away. A few minutes' whispered consultations between Sir Miles and this officer concluded the affair. The principals were to fight on the Downs at eleven o'clock, when there are generally, unless a match is going on, but few people up there. This arranged, Sir Miles walked away to tell Lord Chudleigh; and Harry, with his second, left the Terrace.

Thus the affair, as gentlemen call an engagement in which their own lives and the happiness of helpless women are concerned, was quietly arranged on the well-known laws of 'honour,' just as if it were nothing more than the purchase of a horse, a carriage, or a house; we at home sleeping

meanwhile without suspicion, dreaming, very likely, of love and joy, even when death was threatening those dearest to us. Sometimes when I think of this uncertain life, how it is surrounded by nature with unknown dangers —how thoughtless and wicked men may in a moment destroy all that most we love— how in a moment the strongest fortune is overthrown—how our plans may be frustrated —how the houses of cards (which we have thought so stable) tumble down without a warning, and all our happiness with them— when, I say, I think of these things I wonder how anyone can laugh and be merry, save the insensate wretches whose whole thought is of their own enjoyment for the moment. Yet the Lord, our Father, is above all; in whose hand is the ordering of the smallest thing—the meanest life. Moreover, He hath purposed that youth should be a time of joy, and so hath wisely hidden away the sources of evil.

Cicely Crump was stirring betimes in the morning, and before six was in the market buying the provisions for the day. And as

she passed the door of the Assembly Rooms, she looked in to see the dipper, a friend of hers, who sat at the distribution of the water, though but few of the visitors took it regularly. This good woman, Phœbe Game by name, had kept the secret for more than an hour, having heard it, under promise of strictest secrecy, from one of the late revellers when she took her place among the glasses at five o'clock in the morning. She was a good woman and discreet according to her lights; but this dreadful secret was too much for her, and if she had not told it to Cicely, must have told it to some one else. At sight of her visitor, therefore, discretion abandoned this good woman, and she babbled all she knew. Yet not in a hurry, but little by little, as becomes a woman with such a piece of intelligence, the parting of which is as the parting with power.

'Cicely,' she said, shaking her forefinger in an awful and threatening way, 'I have heard this very morning—ah! only an hour or so since—news which would make your poor young lady jump out of her pretty shoes for fright. I have—I have.'

'Goodness!' cried Cicely. 'Oh, Phœbe! whatever in the world is it?'

'I dare not tell,' she replied. 'It is as much as my place is worth to tell. We dippers are not like common folk. We must have no ears to hear and no tongue to speak. We must listen and make no sign. The quality says what they like and they does what they like. It isn't for a humble dipper to speak, nor to tell, nor to spoil sport—even if it is murder.'

'Oh, tell me!' cried Cicely. 'Why, Phœbe, your tongue can run twenty to the dozen if you like. And if I knew, why, there isn't a mouse in all Epsom can be muter, or a guinea-pig dumber. Only you tell me.'

Thus appealed to, Mrs. Game proceeded (as she had from the first intended) to transfer her secret to Cicely, with many interjections, reflections, sighs, prayers, and injunctions to tell no one, but to go home and pray on her bended knees that Lord Chudleigh's hand might be strengthened and his eye directed, so that this meddlesome young gentleman might be run through in some vital part.

Cicely received the intelligence with dismay. The good girl had more of my confidence than most ladies give to maids; but she was above the common run and quick of apprehension. Besides, she loved me.

'What use,' she asked bitterly, 'for Mr. Nash to prohibit the gentlemen from wearing their swords when they have got them at home ready for using when they want? Mr. Temple, indeed! To think that my young lady would look at him when my lord is about!'

'Well—go, child,' said the dipper. 'You and me, being two poor women with little but our characters, which are, thank the Lord, good so far as we have got, cannot meddle nor make in this pie. I am glad I told you, though. I felt before you came as if the top of my head was being lifted off with the force of it like a loaf with the yeast. Oh, the wickedness of gentlefolk!'

Cicely walked slowly back, thinking what she had best do—whether to keep the secret, or to tell me. Finally she resolved on telling me.

Accordingly she woke me up, for I was

still asleep, and communicated the dreadful intelligence. There could be no doubt of its truth. Sir Miles, she told me, had expostulated with Harry Temple, who would hear no reason. They would meet to kill each other at eleven o'clock, when the ladies were at prayers, on the Downs behind Durdans.

I thanked her, and told her to leave me while I dressed; but not to awaken Mrs. Pimpernel, who would be the better for a long sleep after her late night, while I thought over what was to be done.

First of all I was in a mighty great rage with Harry; the rage I was in prevented me from doing what I ought to have done—viz., had I been in my right mind, I should have gone to him instantly, and then and there I should have ordered him to withdraw from the Wells. Should he refuse, I would have gone to Sir Robert, a Justice of the Peace, and caused the duel to be prevented.

I could find no excuse for Harry. Even supposing that his passion was so violent (which is a thing one ought to be ashamed of rather than to make a boast of it), was that any reason why my happiness was to be

LIBRARY

destroyed? Men, I believe, would like to carry off their wives as the Romans carried off the Sabine women, and no marriage feast would be more acceptable to their barbarous hearts than the one in which these rude soldiers celebrated this enforced union.

Cicely and I looked at each other. It was seven o'clock. The duel was to take place at eleven. Could I seek out Lord Chudleigh? No; his honour was concerned. Or Sir Miles? But the honest baronet looked on a duel as a necessity of life, which might happen at any time to a gentleman, though he himself preferred a bout with cudgels.

Presently Cicely spoke.

'I once heard,' she said, 'a story.'

'Child, this is no time for telling stories.'

'Let me tell it first, Miss Kitty. Nay, it is not a silly story. A gentleman once had planned to carry off a great heiress.'

'What has that to do with Lord Chudleigh? He does not want to carry me off.'

'The gentleman was a wicked man and an adventurer. He only wanted the lady's money. One of her friends, a woman it was, found out the plot. She wanted to

prevent it without bloodshed, or murder, or duelling, which would have happened if it had been prevented by any stupid interference of clumsy men——'

'Oh, Cicely! get on with the story.'

'She did prevent it. And how do you think?'

'How?'

Cicely ran and shut the door which was ajar. Then she looked all about the room and under the bed.

'It was a most dreadful wicked thing to do. Yet to save a friend or a lover, I would even do it.'

'What was it, Cicely?'

'I must whisper.'

* * * * *

'Quick! give me my hood, child.'

She put it on and tied it with trembling fingers, because we were really going to do a most desperate thing.

'Is the house on the road, Cicely? Cannot he go by another way?'

'No; he cannot go by any other way.'

'Say not a word, Cicely. Let not madam think or suspect anything.'

On the road which leads from the town by a gentle ascent to the Downs, there stood (on the left-hand side going up) a large square house in red brick, surrounded by a high wall on which were iron spikes. The door of the wall opened into a sort of small lodge, and the great gates were strong, high, and also protected by iron spikes. I had often observed this house; but being full of my own thoughts, and not a curious person always wanting to discover the business of others, I had not inquired into the reason of these fortifications. Yet I knew that the house was the residence of a certain learned physician, Dr. Jonathan Powlett by name, who daily walked upon the terrace dressed in black, with a great gold-headed cane and an immense full periwig. He had a room in one of the houses of the Terrace in which he received his patients, and he made it his business to accost every stranger on his arrival with the view of getting his custom. Thus he would, after inquiring after the stranger's health, branch off upon a dissertation on the merits of the Epsom waters and an account of the various diseases, with their symptoms

(so that timid men often fancied they had contracted these disorders, and ran to the doctor in terror), which the waters would cure. Mrs. Esther was pleased to converse with him, and I believe spent several guineas in consultations on the state of her health, now excellent.

I had never spoken to him except once when he saluted me with a finely pompous compliment about youth and beauty, the twin stars of such a company as was gathered together at Epsom. 'Yet,' he said, 'while even the physician cannot arrest the first of these, the second may be long preserved by yearly visits to this invigorating spot, not forgetting consultations with scientific and medical men, provided they are properly qualified and hold the license of the College of Physicians, without which a so-called doctor is but a common apothecary, chirurgeon, or leech, fit only to blister and to bleed.'

I made my way to his house, hoping to catch him before he sallied forth in the morning. The place was, as I have said, hidden by high brick walls, and the gate was

guarded by a lodge in which, after ringing a great bell, I found a man of rough and strong appearance, who asked me rudely what was my business.

I told him my business was with his master.

After a little demur, he bade me wait in the lodge while he went away, and presently returned with the doctor.

'My dear young lady,' he cried. 'I trust there is nothing wrong with that most estimable lady, Mrs. Pimpernel?'

'Indeed, doctor,' I replied, 'I come on quite a different errand. And my business is for your ear alone.'

Upon this he bade the fellow retire, and we were left alone in the little room of the lodge.

Then I exposed my business.

He looked very serious when he quite understood what I wanted him to do.

'It is very dangerous,' he said.

I then told him how it might be so managed as that there should be no danger in it at all. He thought for a little, and then he laughed to himself.

'But, madam,' he said, 'suppose I do this for you safely and snugly. What reward am I to have for my trouble and risk?'

'What do you think the business is worth?'

He looked curiously in my face as if wondering how much he could safely say. Then he replied:

'I believe it is worth exactly twenty guineas.'

'I can spare no more than ten,' I replied.

'Well,' he said, 'ten guineas is a trifle indeed for so great a risk and so great a service. Still, if no more is to be had, and to oblige so sweet a young lady——'

Here he held out a fat white hand, the fingers of which were curled as if from long habit in clutching guineas.

I gave him five, as an instalment, promising him the other five when the job was done.

All being safely in train, I returned home to breakfast; but after breakfast I returned to the physician's house, and sat down in the lodge, so placed that I could see without being seen, and looked down the road.

After the bell for morning prayers had stopped, I began to expect my friends. Sure

enough the first who came into sight were my lord and Sir Miles, the former looking grave and earnest. A little while after them came a gentleman whom I knew to be one of the company at Epsom. He was alone. Now this was the most fortunate accident, because had the gentleman, who was none other than Harry's second, accompanied his principal, my plot had failed. But fortunately (as I learned afterwards) they missed each other in the town, and so set off alone. This, at the time, I knew not, being ignorant of the laws of the duello. And last there came along Harry himself, walking quickly as if afraid of being late.

I gave a signal which had been agreed upon, and as he approached the house, the great gates were thrown open, and two strapping tall fellows, stepping quickly into the road, caught poor Harry (the would-be murderer) by the arms, ran a thick rope round him before he had time to cry out, and dragged him into the gates, so quickly, so strongly, and so resolutely, that he had not the least chance of making any resistance. Indeed, it was done in so workmanlike a

fashion that it seemed as if the rogues had done the same thing dozens of times before.

Heavens! To think that a man brought up so virtuously as Harry Temple, a young man of such excellent promise, so great a scholar, and one who had actually studied Theology, and attended the lectures of a Lady Margaret Professor, should, under any circumstances of life, abandon himself to language so wicked and a rage so overwhelming. Nothing ever surprised me so much as to hear that gentle scholar use such dreadful language, as bad as any that I had ever heard in the Fleet Market.

Caught up in this unexpected way, with his arms tied to his sides, carried by two stout ruffians, Harry had, to be sure, some excuse for wrath. His wig had fallen to the ground, his face was red and distorted by passion so that even I hardly knew him, when Doctor Powlett came out of his house and slowly advanced to meet him.

'Ay, ay, ay?' he asked slowly, wagging his head and stroking his long chin deliberately, in the manner of a physician who considereth what best treatment to recom-

mend. 'So this is the unfortunate young gentleman, is it? Ay, he looks very far gone. Nothing less, I fear, than *Dementia acuta cum rabie violentâ.* Resolute treatment in such cases is the best kindness. You will take him, keepers, to the blue-room, and chain him carefully. Your promptitude in making the capture shall be rewarded. As for you, sir'—he shook his forefinger at the unlucky Harry as if he was a schoolmaster admonishing a boy—'as for you, sir, it is lucky, indeed, that you have been caught. You were traced to this town where, I suppose, you arrived early this morning. Ha! I *have* known madmen to be run through their vitals by some gentlemen whom they have accosted; or smothered between mattresses—a reprehensible custom, because it deprives the physician of his dues—or brained with a cudgel. You are fortunate, sir. But have a care: this house is remarkable for its kindness to the victims of mania: but have a care.'

Here Harry burst into a fit of imprecations most dreadful to listen to.

'Anybody,' said the doctor, 'may swear in

this house: a good many do: that often relieves a congested brain, and does no harm to me and my attendants. But disobedience or violence is punished by cold-water baths, by being held under the pump, by bread and water, and by other methods with which I hope you will not make yourself better acquainted. Now, keepers!'

For the truth is that the doctor kept a house for the reception of madmen and unhappy lunatics, and I had persuaded him to kidnap Harry—by mistake. In four-and-twenty hours, I thought, he would have time to repent. It was sad, however, to see a man of breeding and learning so easily give way to profane swearing, and it shows the necessity of praying against temptation. Women, fortunately, do not *know* how to swear. It was, I confess, impossible to pity him. Why, he was going up the hill and on to the Downs with no other object than to kill my lover!

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW HARRY GOT RELEASED.

'He is now,' said Dr. Powlett, returning to the lodge where I awaited him, 'safely chained up in a strait-waistcoat. A strong young gentleman, indeed, and took four of my fellows to reduce him. Almost a pity,' he went on, thinking of the case from a professional point of view, 'that so valiant a fellow is in his right mind.'

'Doctor, what may that mean?'

'Nay, I was but thinking—a physician must needs consider these things — that a county gentleman, with so great an estate, would be indeed a windfall in such an establishment as mine.'

'Why, doctor, would you have all the world mad?'

'They are already,' he replied; 'as mad as March hares—all of them. I would only have them in establishments, with strait-waistcoats on, and an experienced and humane physician to reduce them by means of—those measures which are never known to fail.'

'I hope,' I said seriously, because I began to fear that some violence might have been used, 'that my poor friend has been treated gently.'

'We never,' replied the doctor, 'treat them otherwise than gently. My fellows understand that this—ahem!—unfortunate escaped sufferer from lunacy or dementia (because I have not yet had time to diagnose his case with precision) is to be treated with singular forbearance. One or two cuffs on the head, an admonition by means of a keeper's boot, he hath doubtless received. These things are absolutely necessary: but no collar-bones put out, or ribs broken. In the case of violent patients, ribs, as a rule, do get broken, and give trouble in the setting. Your friend, young lady, has all his bones whole. No discipline, so far, has been administered beyond a few buckets of water,

which it was absolutely necessary to pour over his head, out of common humanity, and in order to calm the excessive rage into which the poor gentleman fell. He is quite calm now, and has neither been put under the pump nor in the tank. I have expressly ordered that there is to be no cudgelling. And I have promised my fellows half-a-guinea apiece'—here he looked at me with a meaning smile—'if they are gentle with him. I have told them that there is a young lady interested in his welfare. My keepers, I assure you, madam, have rough work to do, but they are the most tender-hearted of men. Otherwise, they would be sent packing. And at the sight of half-a-guinea, their hearts yearn with affection towards the patients.'

I smiled, and promised the half-guineas on the liberation of the prisoner. Cuffs and kicks! a few buckets of cold water! a strait-waistcoat! My poor Harry! surely this would be enough to cure any man of his passion. And what a fitting end to a journey commenced with the intention of killing and murdering your old playfellow's lover! Yet,

to be sure, it was a wicked thing I had done, and I resolved to lose no time (as soon as there was no longer any fear of a duel) in beginning to repent.

All this accomplished, which was, after all, only a beginning, I left the house and walked up the hill, intending to find the three gentlemen waiting for their duel. These meetings generally took place, I knew, on the way to the old well. I left Durdans on the right, and struck across the turf to the left. Presently I saw before me a group of three gentlemen, standing together and talking. That is to say, two were talking, and one, Lord Chudleigh, was standing apart. They saw me presently, and I heard Sir Miles, in his loud and hearty voice, crying out :

'Gad so ! It is pretty Kitty herself.'

'You look, gentlemen,' I said, 'as if you were expecting quite another person. But pray, Sir Miles, why on the Downs so early ? There is no race to-day, nor any bull-baiting. The card-room is open, and I believe the inns are not shut.'

'We are here,' he replied, unblushingly,

'to take the air. It is bracing: it is good for the complexion: it expands the chest and opens the breathing-pipes: it is as good as a draught of the waters: it is as stimulating as a bottle of port.'

'Indeed! Then I am surprised you do not use the fresh air oftener. For surely it is cheaper than drinking wine.'

'In future,' he said, 'I intend to do so.'

'But why these swords, Sir Miles? You know the rule of the Wells.'

'They wanted sharpening,' he replied. 'The air of the Downs is so keen, that it sets an edge on sword-blades.'

'You looked—fie, gentlemen!—for Mr. Temple to help sharpen the blades, as a butcher sharpens his knife, by putting steel to steel. Sir Miles, you are a wicked and bloodthirsty man.'

He laughed, and so did the officer. Lord Chudleigh changed colour.

'Gentlemen,' I went on, 'I have to tell you—I have come here to tell you—that an accident has happened to Mr. Temple, which will prevent his keeping the appointment made for him at this hour. I am sure, if he

knew that I was coming here, he would ask me to express his great regret at keeping you waiting. Now, however, you may all go home again, and put off killing each other for another day.'

They looked at each other, astonished.

'My lord,' I said, 'I am sure you will let me ask you what injury my poor friend Harry Temple has done you that you desire to compass his death.'

'Nay,' he replied, 'I desire not to compass any man's death. I am here against my will. I have no quarrel with him.'

'What do you say, Sir Miles?' I asked. 'Are you determined that blood should be spilt?'

'Not I,' he replied. 'But as the affair concerns the honour of two gentlemen, I think, with respect to so fair a lady, that it had better be left in the hands of gentlemen.'

'But,' I said, 'it concerns me too now, partly because I have brought you the reason of Mr. Temple's absence, and partly because he is one of my oldest friends and a gentleman for whom I have a very great regard.

And methinks, Sir Miles, with submission, because a woman cannot understand the laws of the duello or the scruples of what gentlemen call honour—that honour which allows a man to drink and gamble, but not to take a hasty word, that if I can persuade Lord Chudleigh that Mr. Temple does not desire the duel, and is unfeignedly ashamed of himself, and if I can assure Mr. Temple that Lord Chudleigh would not be any the happier for killing Mr. Temple, why then this dreadful encounter need not take place, and we may all go home again in peace.'

Upon this they looked at each other doubtfully, and Sir Miles burst out laughing. When Sir Miles laughed I thought it would all end well at once. But then Harry's second spoke up gravely, and threatened to trouble the waters.

'I represent Mr. Temple in this affair. I cannot allow my principal to leave the field without satisfaction. We have been insulted. We demand reparation to our honour. We cannot be set aside in this unbecoming manner by a young lady.'

'Pray, sir,' I asked, 'does your scarlet

coat and your commission'—I have said he was an officer—'enjoin you to set folks by the ears, and to promote that private method of murder which men call duelling? What advantage will it be to you, provided these two gentlemen fight and kill each other?'

'Why, as for advantage—none,' he said. 'But who ever heard——'

'Then, sir, as it will be of infinite advantage to many of their friends, and a subject of great joy and thankfulness that they should not fight, be pleased not to embroil matters further. And, indeed, sir, I am quite sure that you have breathed the bracing air of the Downs quite long enough, and had better leave us here, and go back to the town. You may else want me to fight in the place of Mr. Temple. That would be a fine way of getting reparation to your wounded honour.'

At this he became very red in the face, and spoke more about honour, laws among gentlemen, and fooling away his time among people who, it seemed, either did not know their own minds, or contrived accidents to happen in the nick of time.

'Hark ye, brother,' said Sir Miles upon this, 'the young lady is right in her way, because, say what we will, our men were going out on a fool's errand. Why, in the devil's name, should they fight? What occasion has Mr. Temple to quarrel with my lord?'

'If Mr. Temple likes . . .' said his second, shrugging his shoulders. 'After all it is his business, not mine. If, in the army, a man pulls another man's nose, why——'

'Will you please to understand, sir,' I broke in, 'that Mr. Temple is really delayed by an accident—it happened to him on his way here, and was entirely unforeseen by him, and was one which he could neither prevent nor expect? If a woman had any honour, in your sense, I would give you my word of honour that this is so.'

'Under these circumstances,' the gallant officer said, 'I do not see why we are waiting here. Mr. Temple will, of course, tell his own story in his own way, and unless the fight takes place on the original quarrel, why, he may find another second. Such a lame ending I never experienced.'

'And that,' interposed Sir Miles, who

surely was the most good-natured of men, 'that reminds me, my good sir, that in this matter, unless we would make bad worse, we all of us had better make up our minds to tell no story at all, but leave it to Mr. Temple. Wherefore, if it please you, I will walk to the town in your company, there to contradict any idle gossip we may hear, and to lay upon the back of the rightful person, either with cudgels or rapiers, any calumny which may be attached to Mr. Temple's name. But, no doubt, he is strong enough to defend himself.'

'Really, Sir Miles,' said the officer with a sneer, 'I wonder you do not fight for him yourself. Here is your principal, Lord Chudleigh, ready for you.'

'Sir, he is not my friend, but the friend of Miss Pleydell. He is, as I believe you or any other person who may quarrel with him would find, perfectly well able to fight his own battles. Meantime I am ready to fight my own, as is already pretty well known.'

With that they both walked off the field, not together, but near each other, the officer in a great huff and Sir Miles rolling along

beside him, big and good-tempered, yet, like a bull-dog, an ugly dog to tackle.

Lord Chudleigh and I were left alone upon the Downs.

'Kitty,' he cried, 'what does this mean?'

'That there is to be no fighting between you and Harry Temple. That is what it means, my lord. Oh, the wickedness of men!'

'But where is he? what is the accident? What does your presence mean? Did he send you?'

I laughed, but could not tell him. Then I reflected that the errand on which he had come was no laughing matter, and I became grave again.

'My lord,' I said, 'is it well to tell a girl one day that you love her, and the next to come out to fight with swords about a trifle? Do you think nothing of a broken heart?'

'My dear,' he replied, 'it was forced upon me, believe me. A man must fight if he is insulted openly. There is no help for it till customs change.'

'Oh!' I cried; 'can that man be in his senses who hopes to win a woman's heart by

insulting and trying to kill — her — her lover ?'

'Yes, Kitty.' He caught my hand and kissed it. 'Your lover—your most unhappy lover ! who can do no more than say he loves you, and yet can never hope to marry you. How did I dare to open my heart to you, my dear, with such a shameful story to tell ?'

'My lord,' I said, 'promise me, if you sincerely love me, which I cannot doubt, not to fight with this hot-headed young man.'

'I promise,' he replied, 'to do all that a man of honour may, in order to avoid a duel with him.'

'Then, my lord, I promise, once more in return—if you would care to have such a promise from so poor a creature as myself——'

'Kitty ! Divine angel !'

'I swear, even though you never wed me, to remain single for your sake. And even should you change your mind, and bestow your affections upon another woman, and scorn and loathe me, never to think upon another man.'

He seized me in his arms, though we were on the open Downs (only there was not a soul

within sight, so far as I could see around), and kissed me on the cheeks and lips.

'My love!' he murmured; 'my sweet and gracious lady!'

Next, I had to consider what best to do about my prisoner. I begged my lord to go home through the Durdans, while I returned by the road. On the way I resolved to liberate Harry at once, but to make conditions with him. I therefore returned to the doctor's, and asked that I might be allowed to see the prisoner.

Dr. Powlett was at first very unwilling. He pointed out, with some justice, that there had not, as yet, been time enough to allow of a colourable pretence at discovering the supposed mistake; a few days, say a fortnight, should elapse, during which the search might be supposed to be a-making; in that interval Harry was to sit chained in his cell, with a strait-waistcoat on.

'And believe me,' said this kind physician, 'he will learn from his imprisonment to admire the many kindnesses and great humanity shown to unhappy persons who are afflicted

with the loss of their wits. Besides this, he will have an opportunity of discovering for what moderate charges such persons are received, entertained, and treated with the highest medical skill, at Epsom, by the learned physician, Jonathan Powlett, *Medicinæ Doctor*. He will swallow my pills, drink my potions (which are sovereign in all diseases of the brain), be nourished on my gruel (compounded scientifically with the Epsom water), will be tenderly handled by my keepers, and all for the low charge of four guineas a week, paid in advance, including servants. And he will, when cured (if Providence assist), come out——'

'Twice as mad as he went in. No, doctor; that, if you please, was not what I intended. The mischief is averted for the present, and, if you will conduct me to your prisoner, I think I can manage to avert it altogether.'

Well, finding that there was nothing more to be got out of the case—I am quite sure that he was ready to treat poor Harry as really mad, and to keep him there as long as any money could be got out of him—the

doctor gave way, and led me to the room in which lay prisoner Harry.

It was a room apart from the great common rooms in which idiots and imbecile persons are chained at regular intervals to the wall, never leaving their places, night or day, until they die. I was thus spared the pain of seeing what I am told is one of the most truly awful and terrifying spectacles in the world. The doctor, who measured his kindness by the guineas which he could extract from his patients' friends, kept certain private chambers, where, if the poor creatures were chained, they were not exposed to the sights and sounds of the common rooms.

In one of these, therefore, he had bestowed Harry.

'Let me,' I said, 'go in first, and speak with him. Do you come presently.'

I think if I had known, beforehand, what they were going to do, I might have relented —but no: anything was better than that those two men should stand, sword in hand, face to face, trying to kill each other for the sake of an unworthy girl.

Yet the poor lad, whom I had ever loved

like a brother, looked in piteous case; for they had put the strait-waistcoat over him, which pinned his arms to his sides, and a chain about his waist which was fastened to the wall behind him; his wig was lying on the floor; he seemed wet through, which was the natural effect of those savage keepers' buckets; his face wore a look of rage and despair sad to behold: his eyes glared like the eyes of a bull at a baiting.

'You here, Kitty?' he cried. 'You? What is the meaning of you in this house?'

'Harry, there has been, it seems, a very terrible blunder committed by Dr. Powlett's servants; they were told you were a certain escaped madman, and they arrested you in the discharge of their duty. It is most fortunate that the fact has been brought to my ears, because I could hasten——'

'Then quick, Kitty, quick!' he cried. 'Go, call the doctor, and set me free. It may not yet be too late. Quick, Kitty! They are waiting for me.'

He forgot, I suppose, what this 'waiting' might mean to me.

'Who are waiting, Harry?'

He did not reply.

'What were you going to do on the Downs this morning, Harry, when they made a prisoner of you?'

'That is nothing to do with you,' he replied. 'Go, call the rascally doctor, whose ribs I will break, and his men, whom I will murder, for this job.'

'Nothing to do with me, Harry? Are you quite sure?'

'You look, Kitty, as if you knew. Did Lord Chud—— No; he would not. Did Sir Miles go sneaking to you with the news? Gad! I feel inclined to try conclusions with the Norfolk baronet with his cudgel about which he makes such a coil.'

'Never mind who told me. I know the whole wicked, disgraceful, murderous story!'

'Disgraceful! You talk like a woman. Shall a man sit down idly, and see his wife snatched out of his arms?'

'What wife? Oh, Harry! you have gone mad about this business. Cannot you understand that I was never engaged to marry you—that I never thought of such a thing? I could never have been your wife, whether

there were any rival or no. And did you think that you would make me think the more kindly of you, should you kill the man who, as you foolishly think, had supplanted you? Or was it out of revenge, and in the hope of making me miserable, that you designed to fight this duel?'

He was silent at this. When a man is in a strait-waistcoat, and chained to a wall, it is difficult to look dignified. But Harry's look of shame and confusion, under the circumstances of having no arms, was truly pitiful.

'You can talk about that afterwards,' he said, doggedly. 'Go, call the scoundrel doctor.'

'Presently. I want to tell you, first, what I think about it. Was it kind to the woman you pretended to love to bring upon her the risk of this great unhappiness? Remember, Harry, I told you all. I told you what I could not have told even to Nancy, in the hope of breaking you of this mad passion. I trusted that you were good and true of heart; and this is the return.'

'It is done now,' he replied, gloomily. 'Do not reproach me, Kitty. Let Lord

Chudleigh run me through the body, and so an end. Now, fetch the doctor fellow and his men.'

'That would have been indeed an end,' I said. 'But, Harry, I have done better than that for you. I have stayed the duel altogether. You will not have to fight.'

With that I told him how I had gone to the Downs, and what I had said to the gentlemen. Only, be sure that I left out what passed in the road between his lordship and myself.

Well, Master Harry flew into a mighty rage upon hearing this, and, being still in the strait-waistcoat and in chains, his wrath was increased because he could not move; he talked wildly about his injured honour, swore that he would go and offer Lord Chudleigh first, and Sir Miles later, such an open and public affront as must be washed out with the blood of one; declared that I might have destroyed his reputation for courage for good, but that he was resolved the world should judge to the contrary. As for the company at the Wells, he would challenge every man at Epsom, if necessary, if he should dare to

asperse his bravery. More he said to the same effect, but I interrupted him.

First, I promised to go with him upon the Terrace, there to meet the people and give him such countenance as a woman could. Next I promised him that Lord Chudleigh should meet him in a friendly spirit; that Sir Miles should be the first to proclaim Mr. Temple's courage. I assured him that he might be quite certain of finding many other opportunities of proving his valiancy, should he continue in the present bloodthirsty frame of mind. I congratulated him on his Christian readiness to throw away a life, which had hitherto been surrounded by so many blessings. Lastly, I advised him to consider how far his present attitude and sentiments corresponded with the divine philosophy of the ancients, whom he had once been so fond of quoting.

He refused to make any promise whatever.

Then I bade him remember—first, where he was; second, under what circumstances he came there; third, that he was surrounded by raving madmen, chained to the wall as one

of them, put in a strait-waistcoat like one of them, and about to be reduced to a diet of bread and water; that no one knew where he was except myself and Dr. Powlett; that neither of us would tell anything about him; and that, in point of fact, unless he promised what I asked, he might remain where he was until all danger was past.

'And that, Harry, may be I know not when. For be very well assured that, as I have obtained from Lord Chudleigh a promise to seek no quarrel with you, I will not let you go from this place until I am assured that you will seek no quarrel with him, either on my account or under any other pretext whatever. You are in great misery (which you richly deserve for your wicked and murderous design); you are wet and hungry: if I go away without your promise, you will continue in greater misery until I return. Bethink thee, Harry.'

Still he was obdurate. Strange that a man will face almost anything rather than possible ridicule.

What, after long persuasion, made him give way was a plain threat that if he would

not promise what I required I would release him at once, but tell his story to all the town, so that, for very ridicule's sake, it would be impossible for the duel to take place.

'It will tell very prettily, Harry,' I said. 'Nancy will dress it up for me, and will relate it in her best and liveliest way; how you tried to get a little country girl of sixteen to engage herself to you; how, when you found her a year later turned into a lady, you thought that you could terrify her into accepting your proposals, on the plea that she had already promised; how you turned sulky; how you quarrelled with Lord Chudleigh, and made him accept your duel; how you were taken prisoner by mistake, and kicked, cuffed——'

'I was not kicked!' he cried.

'You were. Dr. Powlett's patients are always kicked. Then you had buckets of cold water thrown over you; you were put into a strait-waistcoat and chained to the wall: while I came and asked you whether you preferred remaining in the madhouse or promising to behave like an honourable gentleman, and abstain from insulting persons who have done no harm to you or yours.'

'I believe,' he said, 'that it is none other than yourself who has had me captured and treated in this manner. *Femina furens!*'

'A mere mistake, Harry,' I replied, 'of this good physician's zealous servants. Why, it might have happened in any such establishment. But for me to order it—oh! impossible—though, when one comes to think of it, there are few things a woman—*femina furens*, the English of which, Master Harry, I know—would not do to save two friends from hacking and slashing each other.'

Upon this he gave way.

'I must,' he said, 'get away from this place with what speed I may, even if I have to pink half the men in Epsom to prove I am no coward. Kitty, call the doctor. I believe, mad nymph, thou hast a devil!'

'Nay, Harry, all this was planned but to lay the devil, believe me. But promise first.'

'Well, then. It is a hard pill to swallow, Kitty.'

'Promise.'

'I promise.'

'Not to pick any quarrel, or to revive any

old quarrel, with Lord Chudleigh or Sir Miles Lackington.'

He repeated the words after me.

'And to remain good friends with Kitty Pleydell and all who are her friends and followers.'

He repeated these words as well, though with some appearance of swallowing distasteful food.

'I cannot shake hands with you, Harry, because, poor boy, your hands are hidden away beneath that strait-waistcoat. But I know you to be an honourable gentleman, as becomes a man of your birth and so great a scholar, and I accept your word. Wherefore, my dear old friend and schoolfellow, seeing that there is to be no more pretence of love between us, but only of friendship and good wishes, I will—call Dr. Powlett.'

That good man was waiting in the corridor or passage while Harry and I held this long conversation. He came as soon as I called him.

'Sir,' said I, as soon as he came in (I noticed that he looked anxiously behind him to see that his four varlets were at hand, ready to defend him if necessary)—'Sir,

here is a most grievous mischance indeed. For this gentleman is no other than Mr. Harry Temple, Justice of the Peace, Bachelor of Arts of the University of Cambridge, Fellow Commoner of his College Member, of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, and a country gentleman, with a great estate, of East Kent. He is, in truth, doctor, no more mad than you or I, or anyone else in the world.'

The doctor affected the greatest surprise and indignation. First he expressed his inability to believe my statement, although it pained him deeply to differ from a lady; then he called upon one of his men to bring him the *Hue and Cry,* and read out a description of a runaway madman which so perfectly answered the appearance of Harry, that it would deceive anyone, except myself, because I was sure he had himself written it —*after the capture.* He then asked me, solemnly and gravely, if I did not think, having heard the description, that the men were justified in their action.

I replied that the paper so exactly tallied with Harry's appearance that such a mistake

was most easy to account for, and must at once, when explained, command forgiveness. Nevertheless, Harry's face looked far from forgiving.

'Varlets,' said Dr. Powlett, who in some respects reminded me of a certain Doctor of Divinity, because his voice was deep and his manner stately, 'go, instantly, every man Jack, upon his bended knees and ask the pardon of Mr. Temple for an offence committed by pure inadvertence and excess of honourable zeal in the extirpation—I mean the comfortable and kindly confinement of the lunatic, insane, and persons demented.'

They all four fell upon their knees and asked forgiveness.

Harry replied briefly, that as for pardoning them, he would wait until he was free, when he would break all their ribs and wring their necks.

'Sir,' said the doctor, 'you are doubtless in the right, and are naturally, for the moment, annoyed at this little misadventure, at which you will laugh when you consider it at leisure. It will perhaps be of use to you as showing

you on what humane, kindly, and gentle a system such establishments as ours are conducted. As regards the pardon which you will extend to these honest fellows, time is no object to them. They would as soon receive their pardon to-morrow, or a week hence, or a year, or twenty years hence, as to-day, because their consciences are at rest, having done their duty; therefore, good sir, they will wait to release you until you are ready with their pardon.'

Harry, after thinking for a few moments over this statement, said, that so far as he was concerned, the four men might go to the devil, and that he pardoned them.

'There remains only,' said the doctor, 'one person who infinitely regrets the temporary annoyance your honour has been subjected to. It is myself. I have to ask of you, for the sake of my establishment and my reputation, two or three conditions. The first of them is your forgiveness, without which I feel that my self-respect as a true Christian and man of science would suffer; the second, absolute secrecy as regards these proceedings, a knowledge of which might be prejudicial to

me ; and the third——' here he hesitated and glanced sideways at me. 'The third is, of course'—he plucked up courage and spoke confidently—'a reimbursement of the expenses I have been put to, as, for instance'—here he drew out a long roll, and read from it—'services of four men in watching for the escaped lunatic for five hours, at five shillings an hour for each man, five pounds ; to the capture of the same, being done in expeditious and workmanlike fashion, without confusion, scandal, cracking of crowns or breaking of ribs, two guineas ; to bringing him in, and receiving many cuffs, blows, kicks, etc., on the way, three guineas ; to use of private room for one month at one guinea a week (we never let our private and comfortable chambers for less than one month), four guineas ; to wear and tear of bucket, strait-waistcoat, and chain, used in confining and bringing to reason the prisoner, two guineas ; to board and lodging of the patient for one month at two guineas a week (we never receive a patient for less than one month), eight guineas; to attendants' fees for the same time, two guineas for entrance and three

guineas for departure; to my own professional attendance at two guineas a week (I never undertake a case for less than one month certain), eight guineas. The total, good sir, I find to amount to a mere trifle of thirty-eight pounds twelve shillings.'

Heavens! did one ever hear of such an extortionate charge? And all for two hours in a strait-waistcoat!

Harry stormed and swore. But the most he could get was a reduction of the bill by which certain items, including the three guineas for giving and receiving kicks and cuffs, and the two guineas for wear and tear of the bucket which had been emptied over him, were to be remitted. Finally he accepted the conditions, with the promise to pay thirty guineas in full discharge. And really I think that Dr. Powlett had done a good morning's work, having taken ten guineas out of me and thirty out of Harry. But then, as he said, it was a delicate and dangerous business, and might, in less skilful hands (meaning perhaps mine, perhaps his own), have led to very awkward results.

The Terrace was full of people, for it was now half-past twelve. As Harry and I made our way slowly under the trees they parted for us left and right, staring at us as we passed them with curious eyes. For the rumour had spread abroad that there was to have been a duel that morning between Lord Chudleigh and Mr. Temple, and that it was stopped—no one knew how—by some accident which prevented Mr. Temple from keeping his appointment. Now at the other end of the Terrace we met Lord Chudleigh himself, who after saluting me, held out his hand before all the world to Harry, who took it with a bow and a blush.

There was a great sigh of disappointment. No duel, then, would be fought at all, and the two gentlemen who were to have fought it were shaking hands like ordinary mortals, and the lady for whom they were going to fight was walking between them, and all three were smiling and talking together like excellent friends.

Thus, then, did I heal up the quarrel between Harry Temple and my lord. It would have grieved me sore had poor Harry,

almost my brother, been wounded or killed; but what would have been my lot had my lover fallen?

Three suitors had I rejected in a month, and a lover had I gained, who was also, though this I never ventured to confess, my husband. But there was one man whom I had forgotten quite, and he was destined to be the cause of the greatest trouble of all. Who would have believed that Will Levett would have dared to call himself my accepted lover? Who would have believed that this sot, this stable and kennel haunter, would have remembered me for a whole year, and would have come to Epsom in the full confidence that he was coming to claim a bride?

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW WILL LEVETT WAS DISAPPOINTED.

Thus was Harry Temple at last pacified and brought to reason. In the course of a short time he was so far recovered from his passion as to declare his love for another woman, whom he married. This shows how fickle and fleeting are the affections of most men compared with those of women; for I am truly of opinion that no woman can love more than one man in her life, while a man appears capable of loving as many as he pleases all at once or in turn, as the fancy seizes him. Could Solomon have loved in very truth the whole seven hundred?

When I was no longer harassed by Harry's gloomy face and jealous reproaches, I thought that the time was come when I

ought to consider how I should impart to my lord a knowledge of the truth, and I said to myself, day after day: 'To-morrow morning I will do it;' and in the morning I said: 'Nay, but in the evening.' And sometimes I thought to write it, and sometimes to tell it him by word of mouth. Yet the days passed and I did not tell him, being a coward, and rejoicing in the sunshine of his love and kindness, which I could not bear to lose or put in any danger.

And now you shall hear how this delay was the cause of a most dreadful accident, which had well-nigh ruined and lost us altogether.

I could not but remember, when Harry Temple reproached me with falsehood and faithlessness, that Will Levett had made use of nearly the same words, making allowance for Will's rusticity. The suspicion did certainly cross my mind, more than once, that Will may have meant (though I understood him not) the same thing as Harry. And I remembered how he pulled a sixpence out of his pocket and gave me the half which I threw upon the table unheeding, though

every girl knows that a broken sixpence is a pledge of betrothal. But I was in such great trouble and anxiety, that I thought nothing of it and remembered nothing for long afterwards. Yet if Harry came to claim a supposed promise at my hands, why should not Will? which would be a thing much worse to meet, because Harry was now amenable to reason, and by means of the strait-waistcoat and bucket of cold water, with a little talk, I had persuaded him to adopt a wiser course. But no reason ever availed anything with Will, save the reason of desire or the opposition of superior force. As a boy, he took everything he wanted, unless he could be prevented by a hearty flogging; and he bullied every other boy save those who could by superior strength compel him to behave properly. I have already shown how he treated us when we were children and when we had grown up to be great girls. So that, with this suspicion, and remembering Will's dreadful temper and his masterfulness, I felt uneasy indeed when Nancy told me that her brother was coming to Epsom.

'We shall be horribly ashamed of him,'

she said, laughing, though vexed. 'Indeed I doubt if we shall be able to show our faces on the Terrace, after Will has been here a day or two. Because, my dear, he will thrash the men-servants, kiss the girls, insult the company, some of whom will certainly run him through the body, while some he will beat with his cudgel, get drunk in the taverns, and run an Indian muck through the dance at the Assembly Rooms. I have told my father that the best thing for him to do is to pretend that Will is no relation of ours at all, only a rustic from our parish bearing the same name; or perhaps we might go on a visit to London for a fortnight so as to get out of his way; and that, I think, would be the best. Kitty! think of Will marching up and down the Terrace, a dozen dogs after him, his wig uncombed, his hunting-coat stained with mud, halloing and bawling as he goes, carrying an enormous club like Hercules—he certainly is very much like Hercules—his mouth full of countrified oaths. However, he does not like fine folks, and will not often show among us. And while we are dancing in the rooms, he will be

sitting at the door of a tavern mostly, smoking a pipe of tobacco and taking a mug of October with any who will sit beside him and hear his tales of badgers, ferrets, and dogs. Well, fortunately, no one can deny the good blood of the Levetts, which will, we hope, come out again in Will's children; and my father is a baronet of James the First's creation, otherwise it would go hard with our gentility.'

'When do you expect him to come?'

'He sends word that he may come to-night or to-morrow, bringing with him a horse which he proposes to match upon the Downs with any horse at Epsom for thirty guineas a side. One match has been already fixed, and will be run the next day, provided both horses are fresh. I hope Will will not cheat, as he was accused of doing at Maid stone. I suppose we shall all have to go to the Downs to see. Why do men like horse-racing, I wonder? Crack goes the whip, the horses rush past, the people shout, the race is over. Give me enjoyment which lasts a little longer, such as a good country dance,

or a few words with Peggy Baker on the Terrace.'

'Does Will know that I am here?' I asked.

'I suppose not,' she replied. 'Why, my dear, how is Will to know anything? My father laid out large sums upon his education. Yet the end of all is that he never reads anything, not even books on Farriery. As for letters, he is well known not to read those which my mother sometimes sends him; and as for sending any himself, I believe he has forgotten the art of writing. He does everything by word of mouth, like the savages. Perhaps he remembers how to read, because he cannot forget his sufferings over the criss-cross-row and horn-book. Will, Kitty, is an early Briton; he should be dressed in wool and painted with woad; he lives by preference in a stable or a kennel; he ought to have the body and tail and legs of a horse, then he could stay in the stable altogether and be happy.'

Perhaps, I thought, he would not know me again. But in this I was deceived, as shall be presently shown.

Well, then, knowing that Nancy would help me in this possible trouble, I told her exactly what had happened between Will and myself, just as I had told her about Harry, and asked her advice.

It might be that Will had clean forgotten his words, or it might be that he had changed his mind; he might have fallen in love with some girl of the village, or he might find me changed and no longer care for pressing his suit.

Nancy looked grave.

'My brother Will,' she said, 'is as obstinate as he is pigheaded. I am afraid he will expect you to fulfil the engagement which he may think he has made. Never mind, my dear; do not think of it to distress yourself. If he is obstinate, so are you. He cannot marry you against your will.'

He came the next morning, riding into town followed by two servants, one of whom led the famous horse which was to ride the race.

'There,' whispered Nancy, 'is my brother Will.'

We were standing in the church porch

after morning prayers, when he came clattering down the street. He was really a handsome man for those who like a man to be like Hercules for strength, to have full rosy cheeks which later in life become fat and purple, a resolute eye and a strong, straight chin which means obstinacy.

'Oh, how strong he is!' said Nancy, looking after him. 'He could crush together half-a-dozen of our beaux and fribbles between his fingers, and break all their ribs with a single flourish of his cudgel. Well, Will!' she added, as her brother rode out of sight, 'we shall meet at dinner, I dare say. Do you remember, Kitty, how he would tease and torment us, and make us cry? There ought to be no brothers and sisters at all—the girls should grow up in one house, and the boys in another—they should never meet till they are old enough to be lovers, and never be together when they are too old to be lovers. Fancy the stupidity of philosophers in putting men and women under the same name and calling us all humanity, or mankind, as their impudent way is of putting it. What have they in common?

Man drinks, and gambles, and fights—woman sits at home and loves peace and moderation: man wastes—woman saves: man loves to admire—we love to be admired. What single quality have we in common except a desire to be amiable and seem pleasing to the other sex?'

'Very likely,' I replied, thinking of something else. 'No doubt he has long since forgotten the sixpence. No doubt he thinks no more of me or the sixpence either.'

I saw nothing of him that day, because he had so much to do with his stable, and so much to attend to in the matter of his race, that he did not appear upon the Terrace or at the Assembly Room. Harry Temple shrugged his shoulders when I asked him if he had seen Will.

'I saw him,' he said, 'engaged in his usual occupations. He had just cudgelled a stable-boy, was swearing at a groom, rubbing down his racehorse with his own hands, and superintending the preparation of a warm mash for his hack. He seems perfectly happy.'

It was agreed, in spite of my fears, that we should make a party to see this race the

next morning. Nowadays it is no longer the *mode* to seek health at Epsom Wells and on Banstead Downs. The votaries of fashion go to Bath and Tunbridge; the old Wells are deserted, I hear that the Assembly Rooms have fallen into decay, and there are no longer the Monday public breakfast, the card-table, the music, the dancing, which made the place a little heaven for the young in those times when I myself was young. But in one respect Epsom has grown more frequented and more renowned every year:

> 'On Epsom Downs, when racing does begin,
> Large companies from every part come in.'

The spring races were in April, and the summer races in June; but there was a constant racing all the year round with the horses of country gentlemen. They would bring them to make matches with all comers, at such stakes as they could afford to venture on the horses; and in the morning the company would crowd upon the Downs in goodly numbers to bet upon the race, and shout to the winner. Sometimes ladies would go too; not out of any love for the sport, or

interest in horses, but to please their lovers—a desire which is the cause of many a pretty maid's sudden liking for some manly sport. I have known them even show an interest in such rough sports as badger-drawing and otter-hunting: they have been seen to ride after hounds in the midst of the hallos and horns of the hunters: they have even gone with the gentlemen on shooting-parties. Thus there were plenty of girls at Epsom ready to please their gallants by standing about on the Downs (where the wind plays havoc with powder and paint, and destroys irretrievably the fabric of a head), while the panting horses were spurred over the long course by the jockeys, and the backers cried and shouted.

Lord Chudleigh took little joy in this kind of sport, which, perhaps, is a reason why I also disliked the sight. Nancy, also, as well as myself, cared but little to see this famous Epsom sport; nor, indeed, did any of the ladies who formed part of our more intimate company. But on this occasion, as Will was to run a three-year-old of his own training, and as he was going to ride the horse him-

self, and had staked thirty guineas (besides bets) upon the event, it was judged a duty owed to him by the family that all should go. Mrs. Esther went out of respect to Lady Levett; Mr. Stallabras, because he remembered how Pindar had sung of the Olympian Games, and was suddenly fired with the desire of writing a Pindaric Ode upon the Epsom contests. Now, it behoves a poet who sings of a horse-race, first to witness one. Therefore he came to see how it would lend itself to modern metaphor. Sir Miles came because he could get the chance of a few bets upon the race, and because, when there were no cards to the fore, he liked, he said, to hear me talk. Harry Temple came, grumbling and protesting that for men of learning and fashion nothing was more barbarous and tedious than this sport. Could we have had chariot-racing, with athletic games after the manner of the ancients, he would have been pleased. As it was, he hoped that Will would win, but feared that a clown and his money were soon parted; with other remarks equally good-natured.

The race was to be run at half-past eleven.

We had chairs for such as preferred being carried, but the younger ladies walked. We made a gallant procession as we came upon the course, all the ladies wearing Will's colours, which were red and blue. They had railed off a piece of ground where the better sort could stand without being molested by the crowd which always congregates when a great race is to be run. Indeed, on this occasion it seemed as if all the idle fellows for twenty miles round had gathered together on the Downs with one consent, and with them half the rustics of the villages, the tradesmen and workmen of Epsom, Leatherhead and Dorking, and the greater part of the company at the Wells. There were gipsies to tell our fortunes or steal our poultry—but I, for one, had had enough already of fortune-telling from the tent of the pretended Wizard of the masquerade: there were Italians leading a bear: there were a couple of rough men with a bull which was presently to be baited: a canvas enclosure was run up on poles, within which the Cornish giant would wrestle all comers at sixpence a throw: another, where a prize-fight would be held,

admittance one shilling, with twopence each for the defeated man: a puppet play was shown for a penny: for twopence you might see a rare piece of art, the subject of which I know not: and in wax, the histories of Fair Rosamond and Susanna. Other amusements there were. I, at first, took all in honour of Will and his race, but presently learned that a fair had been held at Leatherhead the day before, and that these people, hearing of what was forward, came over to get what could be picked up. And, as one fool makes many, the knowledge of their coming, with the race for an excuse, brought out all the country people, mouth agape, as is their wont.

The horses presently rode out of the paddock—a place where they weigh, dress, put on the saddles, and adjust the preliminaries. Will, in his cap pulled over his ears like a nightcap (because a jockey wears no wig), and in silk jacket, striped with blue and red, riding as if he was part of the animal he sat, looked in his true place. Ever after I have thought of the gallant show he made, while with left hand holding the whip, he bridled the

beautiful creature, which but for his control would have been bounding and galloping over the plain. But they explained to us that racehorses know when racing is meant, and behave accordingly, save that they cannot always be refrained from starting before the time.

Will's rival and competitor, whose name I forget (but I had never seen him before), was a man of slighter figure, who rode equally well, but did not at the same time appear to such advantage on horseback. Lord Chudleigh explained to us that while Will rode naturally, sitting his horse as if he understood what the creature wished to do, and where he wanted to go; the other man sat him by rule of thumb, as if the horse was to understand his master and not the master his horse. I have ridden a great deal since then, and I know, now, the justice of my lord's remarks, though I own that this perfect understanding between horse and rider is not commonly found; and for my own part I remember but one horse, three parts Arabian, with which I ever arrived at a complete understanding. Even with him the understanding was one-

sided, and ended in his always going whithersoever he pleased.

The adversary's colours were white and green; pretty colours, though bad for the complexion of women; so that I was glad Will's were suited to the roses of our cheeks.

They began by riding up and down for a quarter of an hour, Will looking mighty important, stroking his horse, patting his neck, talking to him, checking him when he broke into a canter or a gallop. The other man (he in white and green) had trouble to keep his horse from fairly bolting with him, which he did for a little distance more than once.

Then the starters took their places, and the judge his, in front of the winning-post, and the horses started.

White and green led for a quarter of a mile; but Will was close behind: it was pretty to see the eagerness of the horses—how they pressed forward with straining necks.

'Will is holding back,' cried Harry, with flashing eyes. 'Wait till they are over the hill.'

'I feel like Pindar,' cried Mr. Stallabras.

'Would that Mr. Levett was Hiero of Syracuse!'

'O Will!' exclaimed Nancy, as if he could hear. 'Spur up your horse! If you lose the race, I will never forgive you.'

We all stood with parted lips and beating hearts. Yes; we understood the joy of horse-racing: the uncertainty of the struggle: the ambition of the noble creatures: the eagerness of the riders: their skill: their coolness: the shouts of the people—ah! the race is over.

Just before the finish, say two hundred yards the other side of the winning-post, Will rose in his saddle, plied whip, and cried to his horse. It answered with a rush, as if struck by a sudden determination to be first: the other horse, a little tired perhaps, bounded onwards as well; but Will took the lead and kept it. In a moment the race was finished, and Will rode gallantly past us, ahead by a whole length, amid the cheers and applause of the people.

When the race was finished the visitors ran backwards and forwards, congratulating or condoling with each other. Many a long

face was pulled as the bets were paid: many a jolly face broadened and became more jolly as the money went into pocket. And then I saw what is meant by the old saying about money made over the devil's back. For those who lost, lost outright, which cannot be denied: but those who won immediately took their friends to the booths where beer and wine and rum were sold, and straightway got rid of a portion of their winnings. No doubt the rest went in the course of the day in debauchery. So that the money won upon the race benefited no one except the people who sold drink. And they, to my mind, are the last persons whom one would wish to benefit, considering what a dreadful thing in this country is the curse of drink.

If Will looked a gallant rider on horseback, he cut but a sorry figure among the gentlemen when he came forth from the paddock, having taken off his jacket and put on again his wig, coat, and waistcoat. For he walked heavily, rolling in his gait (as a ploughboy, not a sailor), and his clothes were muddy and disordered, while his wig was awry. Lady Levett beckoned to him, and

he came towards us sheepishly bold, as is the way with rustic gentlemen.

'So, Will,' shouted his father, heartily, 'thou hast won the match. Well rode, my boy!'

'Well rode!' cried all. 'Well rode!'

He received our congratulations with a grin of satisfaction, saluting the company with a grin, and his knuckles to his forehead like a jockey. On recovering, he examined us all leisurely.

'Ay,' he said. 'There you are, Harry, talking to the women about books and poetry and stuff. What good is that when a race is on? Might as well have stayed at Cambridge. Well, Nancy—oh! I warrant you, so fine as no one in the country would know you. Fine feathers make fine birds, and——' here he saw me, and stared hard with his mouth open. 'Gad so! — it's Kitty! Hoop! Hollo!' Upon this he put both hands to his mouth and raised such a shout that we all stopped our ears, and the dogs barked and ran about furiously, as if in search of a fox. 'Found again! Kitty, I am right glad to see thee. Did I ride well? Were you proud

to see me coming in by a neck? Thinks I, "I don't care who's looking on, but I'll show them Will Levett knows how to ride." If I'd known it was you I would have landed the stakes by three clear lengths, I would. Let me look at thee, Kitty. Now, gentlemen, by your leave.' He shoved aside Lord Chudleigh, and Harry, and pushed between them. 'Let me look at thee well—ay! more fine feathers—but'—here he swore great oaths—'there never was anything beneath them but the finest of birds ever hatched.'

'Thank you, Will, for the compliment,' I began.

'Why, if anyone should compliment you, Kitty, who but I?'

I thought of the broken sixpence, and trembled.

'A most pretty speech indeed,' said Peggy Baker. 'Another of Miss Pleydell's swains, I suppose?'

'My brother,' said Nancy, 'has been Kitty's swain since he was old enough to walk; that is, about the time when Kitty was born. He is as old a swain as Mr. Temple here.'

'I don't know naught about swains,' said Will, 'but I'm Kitty's sweetheart. And if any man says nay to that, why let him step to the front, and we'll have that business settled on the grass, and no time wasted.'

'Brother,' cried Nancy, greatly incensed by a remark of such low breeding, 'remember that you are here among gentlemen, who do not fight with cudgels and fists for the favours of ladies.'

'Nay, dear Miss Levett,' said Peggy, laughing; 'I find Mr. William vastly amusing. No doubt we might have a contest, a tournament after the manner of the ancients, with Miss Pleydell as the Queen of Beauty, to give her favours to the conquering knight. I believe we can often witness a battle with swords and pistols, if we get up early enough, in Hyde Park; but a duel with fists and cudgels would be much more entertaining.'

'Thank you, miss,' said Will. 'I should like to see the man who would stand up against me.'

'I think,' Lord Chudleigh interposed, 'that as no one is likely to gratify this

gentleman's strange invitation, we may return to the town. Miss Pleydell, we wait your orders.'

Will was about to say something rude, when his sister seized him by the arm and whispered in his ear.

'O Lord! a lord!' he cried. 'I beg your lordship's pardon. There, that is just like you, Nancy, not to tell me at the beginning. Well, Kitty, I am going to look after the horse. Then I will come to see thee.'

'Your admirer is a bucolic of an order not often found among the sons of such country gentlemen as Sir Robert Levett,' said Lord Chudleigh, presently.

'He is addicted to horses and dogs, and he seems to consider that he may claim—or show—some sort of equal attachment to me,' I answered.

Then I told him the story of the broken sixpence, and how I became engaged, without knowing it, to both Harry Temple and Will Levett on the same day.

My lord laughed, and then became grave.

'I do not wonder,' he said, 'that all classes of men have fallen in love with the sweetest

and most charming of her sex. That does not surprise me. Still, though we have disposed of Mr. Temple, who is, I am bound to say, a gentleman open to reason, there may be more trouble with this headstrong country lad, who is evidently in sober earnest, as I saw from his eyes. What shall we do, Kitty?'

'My lord,' I whispered, 'let me advise for your safety. Withdraw yourself for a while from Epsom. Give up Durdans and go to London. I could not bear to see you embroiled with this rude and boisterous clown. Oh, how could such a woman as Lady Levett have such a son? Leave me to deal with him as best I can.'

But he laughed at this. To be sure, fear had no part in the composition of this noble, this incomparable man.

'Should I run away because a rustic says he loves my Kitty?' But then his forehead clouded again. 'Yet, alas! for my folly and my crime, I may not call her my Kitty.'

'Oh yes, my lord! Call me always thine. Indeed, I am all thine own, if only I could think myself worthy.'

We were walking together, the others a

little distance behind us, and he could do no more than touch my fingers with his own. Alas! the very touch of his fingers caused a delightful tremor to run through my veins—so helplessly, so deeply was I in love with him.

Thus we walked, not hand-in-hand, yet from time to time our hands met: and thus we talked, not as betrothed lovers, yet as lovers: thus my lord spoke to me, confiding to me his most secret affairs, his projects, and his ambitions, as no man can tell them save to a woman whom he loves. Truly, it was a sweet and delicious time. I fondly turn to it now, after so many years, not, heaven knows! with regret, any more than September, rich in golden harvest and laden orchards, regrets the sweet and tender April, when all the gardens were white and pink with the blossoms of plum and pear and apple, and the fields were green with the springing barley, oats, and wheat. Yet a dear, delightful time, only spoiled by that skeleton in the cupboard, that consciousness that the only person who stood between my lord and his happiness was—the woman he loved. Heard man ever so strange, so pitiful a case?

At the foot of the hill Lord Chudleigh left us, and turned in the direction of Durdans, where he remained all that day, coming not to the Assembly in the evening. Mrs. Esther and I went home together to dinner, and I know not who was the better pleased with the sport and the gaiety of the morning, my kind madam or Cicely, the maid, who had been upon the Downs and had her fortune told by the gipsies, and it was a good one.

'But, my dear,' said Mrs. Esther, 'it is strange indeed that so loutish and countrified a bumpkin should be the son of parents so well-bred as Sir Robert and Lady Levett.'

'Yet,' I said, 'the loutish bumpkin would have me marry him. Dear lady, would you wish your Kitty to be the wife of a man who loves the stable first, the kennel next, and his wife after his horses and his dogs?'

After dinner, as I expected, Will Levett called in person. He had been drinking strong ale with his dinner, and his speech was thick.

'Your servant, madam,' he said to Mrs. Esther. 'I want speech, if I may have it,

with Miss Kitty, alone by herself, for all she sits with her finger in her mouth yonder, as if she was not jumping with joy to see me again.'

'Sir!' I cried.

'Oh! I know your ways and tricks. No use pretending with me. Yet I like them to be skittish. It is their nature to. For all your fine frocks, you're none of you any better than Molly the blacksmith's girl, or Sukey at the Mill. Never mind, my girl. Be as fresh and frolic as you please. I like you the better for it—before we are married.'

'Kitty dear,' cried Mrs. Esther, in alarm, 'what does this gentleman mean?'

'I do not know, dear madam. Pray, Will, if you can, explain what you mean.'

'Explain? explain? Why——' here he swore again, but I will not write down his profane and wicked language. Suffice it to say that he called heaven and earth to witness his astonishment. 'Why, you mean to look me in the face and tell me you don't know?'

'We are old friends, Will,' I said, 'and I

should like, for Nancy's sake, and because Lady Levett has been almost a mother to me, out of her extreme kindness, that we should remain friends. But when a gentleman salutes me before a company of gentlemen and ladies as his sweetheart, when he talks of fighting other gentlemen—like a rustic on a village green——'

'Wouldst have me fight with swords and likely as not get killed, then?' he asked.

'When he assumes these rights over me, I can ask, I think, for an explanation.'

'Certainly,' said Mrs. Esther. 'We are grieved, sir, to have even a moment's disagreement with the son of so honourable a gentleman and so gracious a lady as your respected father and worthy mother, but you will acknowledge that your behaviour on the Downs was startling to a young woman of such strict propriety as my dear Kitty.'

He looked from one to the other as if in a dream.

Then he put his hand into his pocket and dragged out the half sixpence.

'What's that?' he asked me, furiously.

'A broken sixpence, Will,' I replied.

'Where is the other half?'

'Perhaps where it was left, on the table in the parlour of the Vicarage.'

'What!' he cried; 'do you mean to say that you didn't break the sixpence with me?'

'Do you mean to say, Will, that I did? As for your breaking it, I do not deny that: I remember that you snapped it between your fingers without asking me anything about it; but to say that I broke it, or assented to your breaking it, or carried away the other half—Fie, Will, fie!'

'This wench,' he said, 'is enough to drive a man mad. Yet, for all your fine clothes and your paint and powder, Mistress Kitty, I've promised to marry you. And marry you I will. Put that in your pipe, now.'

'Marry me against my consent, Will? That can hardly be.'

'Is it possible,' cried Mrs. Esther, seriously displeased, 'that we have in this rude and discourteous person a son of Sir Robert Levett?'

'I never was crossed by woman or man or puppy yet,' cried Will doggedly, and taking no notice whatever of Mrs. Esther's rebuke;

'and I never will be! Why, for a whole year and more I've been making preparations for it. I've broke in the colt out of Rosamund by Samson and called him Kit, for you to ride. I've told the people round, so as anybody knows there's no pride in me, that I'm going to marry a parson's girl, without a farden, thof a baronet to be——'

Will easily dropped into rustic language, where I do not always follow him.

'Oh, thank you, Will. That is kind indeed. But I would rather see you show the pride due to your rank and birth. You ought to refuse to marry a parson's girl. Or, if you are resolved to cast away your pride, there's many a farmer's girl—there's Jenny of the Mill, or the blacksmith's Sue: more proper persons for you, I am sure, and more congenial to your tastes than the parson's girl.'

'I don't mind your sneering—not a whit, I don't,' he replied. 'Wait till we're married, and I warrant you shall see who's got the upper hand! There'll be mighty little sneering then, I promise you.'

This brutal and barbarous speech made me angry.

'Now, Will,' I said, 'get up and go away. We have had enough of your rustic insolence. Why, sir, it is a disgrace that a gentleman should be such a clown. Go away from Epsom: leave a company for which your rudeness and ill-temper do not fit you: go back to your mug-house, your pipe, your stables, and your kennels. If you think of marrying, wed with one of your own rank. Do you hear, sir? one of your own rank! Gentle born though you are, clown and churl is your nature. As for me, I was never promised to you; and if I had been, the spectacle of this amazing insolence would break a thousand promises.'

He answered by an oath. But his eyes were full of dogged determination which I knew of old; and I was terrified, wondering what he would do.

'I remember, when you were a boy, your self-will and heedlessness of your sister and myself. But we are grown up now, sir, as well as yourself, and you shall find that we

are no longer your servants. What! am I to marry this clown——'

'You shall pay for this!' said Will. 'Wait a bit; you shall pay!'

'Am I to obey the command of this rude barbarian, and become his wife; not to cross him, but to obey him in all his moods, because he wills it? Are you, pray, the great Bashaw?'

'Mr. Levett,' said Mrs. Esther, 'I think you had better go. The Kitty you knew was a young and tender child; she is now a grown woman, with, I am happy to say, a resolution of her own. Nor is she the penniless girl that you suppose, but my heiress; though not a Pimpernel by blood, yet a member of as good and honourable a house as yourself.'

He swore again in his clumsy country fashion that he never yet was baulked by woman, and would yet have his way; whereas, so far as he was a prophet (I am translating his rustic language into polite English) those who attempted to say him nay would in the long-run find reason to repent with bitterness their own mistaken

action. All his friends, he said, knew Will Levett. No white-handed, slobbering, tea-drinking hanger-on to petticoats was he; not so: he was very well known to entertain that contempt for women which is due to a man who values his self-respect and scorns lies, finery, and make-believe fine speeches. And it was also very well known to all the country-side that, give him but a fleer and a flout, he was ready with a cuff side o' the head; and if more was wanted, with a yard of tough ash, or a fist that weighed more than most. As for drink, he could toss it off with the best, and carry as much; as for racing, we had seen what he could do and how gallant a rider he was; and for hunting, shooting, badger-baiting, bull-baiting, dog-fighting, and cocking, there was not, he was ready to assure us, his match in all the country. Why, then, should a man, of whom his country was proud — no mealy-mouthed, Frenchified, fine gentleman, of whom he would fight a dozen at once, so great was his courage—be sent about his business by a couple of women? He would let us know! He pitied our want of discern-

ment, and was sorry for the sufferings which it would bring upon one of us, meaning Kitty; of which sufferings he was himself to be the instrument.

When he had finished this harangue he banged out of the room furiously, and we heard him swearing on the stairs and in the passage, insomuch that Cicely and her mother came up from the kitchen, and the former threatened to bring up her mop if he did not instantly withdraw or cease from terrifying the ladies by such dreadful words.

'My dear,' said Mrs. Esther, 'we have heard, alas! so many oaths that we do not greatly fear them. Yet this young man is violent, and I will to Lady Levett, there to complain about her son.'

She put on her hat, and instantly walked to Sir Robert's lodgings, when, before the baronet, Lady Levett, and Nancy she laid her tale.

'I know not,' said Lady Levett, weeping, 'what hath made our son so self-willed and so rustical. From a child he has chosen the kennel rather than the hall, and stable-boys for companions rather than gentlemen.'

'Will is rough,' said his father, 'but I cannot believe that he would do any hurt to Kitty, whom he hath known (and perhaps in his way loved) for so long.'

'Will is obstinate,' said Nancy, 'and he is proud and revengeful. He has told all his friends that he was about to marry Kitty. When he goes home again he will have to confess that he has been sent away.'

'Yet it would be a great match for Kitty,' said Will's mother.

'No, madam, with submission,' said Mrs. Esther. 'The disparity of rank is not great, as your ladyship will own, and Kitty will have all my money. The real disparity is incompatibility of sentiment.'

'Father,' said Nancy, 'you must talk to Will. And Mrs. Pimpernel, take care that Kitty be well guarded.'

Sir Robert remonstrated with his son. He pointed out, in plain terms, that the language he had used and the threats he had made were such as to show him entirely unfitted to be the husband of any gentlewoman: that Kitty was, he had reason to believe, promised to another man: that it was ab-

surd of him to suppose that a claim could be founded on words addressed to a child overcome with grief at the death of her father. He spoke gravely and seriously, but he might have preached to the pigs for all the good he did.

Will replied that he meant to marry Kitty, and he would marry her: that he would brain any man who stood in his way: that he never yet was crossed by a woman, and he never would; with more to the same effect, forgetting the respect due to his father.

Sir Robert, not losing his patience, as he would have been perfectly justified in doing, went on to remonstrate with his son upon the position which he was born to illustrate, and the duties which that involved. Foremost among these, he said, were respect and deference to the weaker sex. Savages and barbarous men, he reminded him, use women with as little consideration as they use slaves; indeed, because women are weak, they are, among wild tribes, slaves by birth. 'But,' he said, 'for a gentleman in this age of politeness to speak of forcing a lady to marry

him against her will is a thing unheard of.'

'Why, lad,' he continued, 'when I was at thy years, I would have scorned to think of a woman whose affections were otherwise bestowed. It would have been a thing due to my own dignity, if not to the laws of society, to leave her and look elsewhere. And what hath poor Kitty done, I pray? Mistaken an offer of marriage (being then a mere child and chit of sixteen) for an offer of friendship. Will, Will, turn thy heart to a better mood.'

Will said that it was no use talking, because his mind was made up: that he was a true Kentishman, and a British bulldog. Holdfast was his name: when he made up his mind that he was going to get anything, that thing he would have: that, as for Kitty, he could no more show himself back upon the village-green, or in the village inn, or at any cock-fighting, bull-baiting, badger-drawing, or horse-race in the country-side, unless he had brought home Kitty as his wife. Wherefore, he wanted no more ado, but let the girl come to her right mind,

and follow to heel, when she would find him (give him his own way, and no cursed contrariness) the best husband in the world. But, if not,——

Then Sir Robert spoke to other purpose. If, he told his son, he molested Kitty in any way whatever, he would, in his capacity as justice of the peace, have him instantly turned out of the town; if he offered her any insult, or showed the least violence to her friends, he promised him, upon his honour, to disinherit him.

'You may drink and smoke tobacco with your grooms and stable-boys at home,' he said. 'I have long been resigned to that. But if you disgrace your name in this place, as sure as you bear that name, you shall no longer be heir to aught but a barren title.'

Will answered not, but walked away with dogged looks.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW WILL WOULD NOT BE CROSSED.

I KNOW not what Will proposed to himself when his father at first admonished him; perhaps, one knows not, he even tried to set before himself the reasonableness of his father's rebuke; perhaps, as the sequel seems to show, he kept silence, resolving to have his own way somehow.

However that might be, Will ceased to molest me for the time, and I was even in hopes that he had seen the hopelessness of his desires. Our days went on without any other visits from him, and he did not seek me out upon the Terrace or in the Assembly Rooms.

Poor Nancy's predictions were, however, entirely fulfilled. For Will could not, by any

persuasion of hers, be induced at first to abstain from showing himself in public. To be sure, he did not 'run an Indian muck' among the dancers, but he became the terror of the whole company for a rough boorishness which was certainly unknown before in any polite assembly. He did not try to be even decently polite; he was boorish, not like a boor, but like a Czar of Russia, with a proud sense of his own position; he behaved as if he were, at Epsom Wells, the young squire among the villagers who looked up to him as their hero and natural king. If he walked upon the Terrace he pushed and elbowed the men, he jolted the ladies, he stepped upon trains, pushed aside dangling canes and deranged wigs, as if nobody was to be considered when he was present. Sometimes he went into the card-room and took a hand; then, if he was tempted to give his antagonist the lie direct, he gave it; or if he lost, he said rude things about honesty; and he was so strong, and carried so big a cudgel, that for a time nobody dared to check him. Because, you see, by Nash's orders, the gentlemen wore no swords. Now, although it is possible to

challenge a man and run him through, what are you to do with one who perhaps would refuse a challenge, yet would, on provocation, being horribly strong, cudgel his adversary on the spot? Of course, this kind of thing could not last; it went on just as long as the forbearance of the gentlemen allowed, and then was brought to an end. As for Will, during the first few days he had not the least consideration for anyone; all was to give way to his caprice.

I have already remarked upon the very singular love which young men of all ranks seem to have for chucking under the chin young women of the lower classes. It was very well known at Epsom Wells that many gentlemen rose early in the morning in order to enjoy this pastime upon the chins of the higglers who brought the fruit, eggs, fowls, and vegetables from the farmhouses. From six to nine chin-chucking, not actually upon the Parade and the Terrace, but close by, among the trees, on the steps of houses, beside the pond, was an amusement in full flow. Many of the higglers were comely red-cheeked damsels who thought it fine thus to

be noticed by the quality, and I suppose no harm came of it all, save a little pampering of the conceit and vanity of young girls, so that they might dream of gentlemen instead of yeomen, and aspire beyond their rank instead of remembering the words of the Catechism to 'learn and labour to do their duty in their own station of life.' To attract the attention of a dozen young fellows: to have them following one about, even though one carried a basket full of eggs for sale: to listen to their compliments: to endure that chin-chucking—I suppose these things were to the taste of the girls, because, as Cicely told me, there was great competition among them who should carry the basket to the Wells. Now Master Will was quite at home, from his village experiences, with this pastime, and speedily fell in with it, to the annoyance and discomfiture of the London beaux and fribbles. For, still acting upon the principles that Epsom was his own parish, the village where he was Sultan, Great Bashaw, Heyduc, or Grand Seigneur, he at once took upon himself the right of paying these attentions to any or all of the

damsels, without reference to previous preferences. This, which exasperated the fair higglers, drove the beaux nearly mad. Yet, because he was so strong and his cudgel was so thick, none durst interfere.

I have since thought, in reflecting over poor Will's history, that there are very few positions in life more dangerous to a young man than that of the only son of a country squire, to have no tastes for learning and polite society, and to live constantly on the estate. For among the rough farmers and labourers there can be no opposition or public feeling upon the conduct, however foolish and ungoverned, of such a young man; the rustics and clowns are his very humble servants, nay, almost his slaves; they tremble at his frown; if he lifts his stick they expect a cudgelling; as for the women and girls of the village, the poor things are simply honoured by a nod and a word; the estate will be his, the fields will be his, the cottages his; the hares, rabbits, partridges, pheasants will be his; even the very men and women will be his, nay, are his already. Wherever he goes he is saluted; even in the church,

the people rise to do him reverence; hats are doffed and reverence paid if he walks the fields, or rides upon the roads; every day, supposing he is so unhappy as to remain always upon his own estate, he is made to feel his greatness until he comes to believe, like King Louis XV. himself, that there is no one in the world but must bow to his order, nothing that he desires but he must have. And, speaking with the respect due to my benefactors, I think that Sir Robert, a man himself of singular good feeling and high breeding, was greatly to blame in not sending his son to travel, or in some way to make him mix with his equals and superiors. For such a character as Will's is formed insensibly. A man does not become selfish and boorish all at once. Therefore, his parents did not notice, until it was forced upon them, what all the world deplored—the self-will and boorishness of their only son. To the last I think that Lady Levett looked upon him as a young man of excellent heart, though stubborn.

'You *shall* marry me,' he had said. Therefore it was war to the death, because,

as you all know, I could not possibly marry him.

It was no secret at Epsom that this young autocrat had said those words; in fact, he used them in public, insulting Harry Temple upon the very Terrace before all the company.

'I warn you,' he said, 'keep away from Kitty. She's going to be my wife. I've told her so. Therefore, hands off.'

'Why, Will,' Harry replied good-naturedly, 'what if she refuses?'

'She shan't refuse. I've said she shall marry me, and she shall,' he replied. 'Refuse? It's only her whimsical tricks. All fillies are alike. Hands off, Master Harry.'

'Why,' cried Peggy Baker, 'what a pretty, genteel speech, to be sure! Oh, Mr. Levett, happy is the woman who will be your wife! Such kindness of disposition! such sweetness! such gallantry! such sensibility!'

'I know what you mean,' said Will, swearing a big oath; 'and I don't value your words nor your opinion—no—not a brass farden, no more than I value your powder,

and your paint, and your patches. You're all alike; blacksmith's Sue is worth a hundred of ye.'

Peggy burst out laughing, and Will strode away. He did not like to be laughed at, yet could not help being intolerably rude.

When I found that Will, although he made himself the laughing-stock—and the terror—of the place, ceased to molest me, I was more easy in my mind; certainly, it would not have been pleasant to walk on the Terrace, or even to go to the Assembly, if one had feared to meet this rough and bearish inamorato, who might have insulted one, or a gentleman with one, in the most intolerable manner. However, the evening was generally a safe time, because then he loved to sit in a tavern playing all-fours over a pipe and a tankard with any country parson, or even any town tradesman, who would share his beer and be complaisant with his moods.

This was worse than the case of Harry Temple, because, as I have said before, I could not hope, whatever I did, to bring him to reason. Sometimes I thought, but wildly, of Dr. Powlett's establishment. Suppose

that the whole force of the house had succeeded in putting him into chains and a strait-waistcoat, which was certainly doubtful—besides, so wicked a thing could not be done twice—what assurance had I of good behaviour on release? He would promise—Will was always ready to promise, having no more regard to truth than an ourang-outang; but when he was free, with his cudgel in his hand, what would he not do?

I have said that he was prodigiously strong, besides being fierce and masterful of aspect. This made men give way to him; also he got a reputation for being stronger than perhaps he really was. For when, as continually happened, booths were put on the Downs for wrestling, singlestick, quarterstaff, boxing, and other trials of skill and strength, Will would always go, sit out the whole games, and then challenge the victor, whom he always conquered, coming off the hero of the day. To be sure, it was whispered that the contest was generally arranged—by promise of half-a-crown—to be decided in favour of Will. It seems strange, but I suppose there are men who, for half-a-crown, will not only sell a

fight—on which bets have been made—but also take a sound drubbing as well.

And if he had a dispute with a gentleman —it was impossible for him to exchange two words without causing a dispute—he would immediately propose to settle the affair with cudgels or fists. Now a gentleman should be ready to fight a street bully or a light porter in London with any weapons, if necessary; but what sort of society would that be in which the gentlemen would take off coat and wig and engage with fists or clubs on the smallest quarrel?

He was so rude and overbearing that the company began to be positively afraid of going to the Terrace or the Assembly Rooms, and indeed I think he would have driven the whole of the visitors away in a body but for the timely interference of Lord Chudleigh and Sir Miles Lackington. It was the day after his open insult to Harry Temple, who could not call out the son of his former guardian and his old playfellow. Therefore these two resolved that there should be an end of this behaviour.

It was bruited abroad that some steps of a

serious nature were going to be taken; there had been found a man, it was said, to bell the cat; it was even whispered that a prize-fighter of stupendous strength, dexterity, and resolution had been brought down expressly from London in order to insult Will Levett, receive a challenge for single-stick, or fists, or quarter-staff, instantly accept it, and thereupon give the village bantam-cock so mighty a drubbing that he would not dare again to show his face among the company. Indeed, I think that was the best thing which could have been done, and I sincerely wish they had done it.

But Lord Chudleigh and Sir Miles would not treat a gentleman, even so great a cub and clown, with other than the treatment due to a gentleman. Therefore, they resolved upon an open and public expostulation and admonition. And, mindful of the big cudgel, they broke the laws of the Wells, and put on their swords before they came together to the Terrace, looking grave and stern, as becomes those who have duties of a disagreeable kind to perform. But to see the excitement of the company. They expected, I believe,

nothing short of a battle between Lord Chudleigh and Sir Miles on the one hand, armed with swords, and Will on the other, grasping his trusty cudgel. The cudgel, in his hands, against any two combatants, would have been a mighty awkward weapon, but, fortunately, gentlemen of Will's kind entertain a healthy repugnance to cold steel.

It was about twelve o'clock in the forenoon when Will the Masterful, forcing his way, shoulders first, among the crowd, found himself brought up short by these two gentlemen. Round them were gathered a circle of bystanders, which increased rapidly till it was twenty or thirty deep.

'Now then,' he cried, 'what is the meaning of this? Let's pass, will ye, Lord or no Lord?'

As Lord Chudleigh made no reply, Will, growling that a freeborn Englishman was as good as a lord or a baronet in the public way, tried to pass through them. Then he was seized by the coat-collar by Sir Miles, whose arm was as strong as his own.

'Hark ye,' said the baronet. 'We want a few words with you, young cub!'

Will lifted his head in amazement. Here was a man quite as strong as himself who dared to address him as a cub.

'We find that you go about the Wells,' continued the baronet, 'which is a place of entertainment for ladies and gentlemen, insulting, pushing, and behaving with no more courtesy than if you were in your own stable-yard. Now, sirrah, were it not for the respect we have for your father we should make short work of you.'

'Make short work of ME!' cried Will, red in the face, and brandishing his cudgel. 'Make short work of ME!'

'Certainly. Do not think we shall fight you with sticks; and if you make the least gesture with that club of yours, I shall have the pleasure of running you through with my sword.' Contrary to the rules of the Wells, both gentlemen, as I have said, wore their swords on this occasion, and here Sir Miles touched his sword-hilt. 'And now, sir, take a word of advice. Try to behave like a gentleman, or, upon my word of honour, you shall be driven out of the Wells with a horse-

whip by the hands of the common grooms of the place, your proper companions.'

Will swore prodigiously, but he refrained from using his cudgel. Indeed, the prospect of cold steel mightily cooled his courage.

'And a word from me, sir,' said Lord Chudleigh, speaking low. 'You have dared to make public use of a certain young lady's name. I assure you, upon the honour of a peer, that if you presume to repeat this offence, or if you in any way assert a claim to that lady's favour, I will make you meet me as one gentleman should meet another.'

Will looked from one to the other. Both men showed that they meant what they promised. Sir Miles, with a careless smile, had in his eye a look of determination. Lord Chudleigh, with grave face and set lips, seemed a man quite certain to carry out his promise. Will had nothing to say: he was like one dumbfoundered: therefore, he swore. This is the common refuge of many men for all kinds of difficulties, doubts, and dangers. Some rogues go swearing to the gallows. Men call them insensible and callous, whereas I believe that these wretches are

simply incapable of expressing emotion in any other way. Swearing, with them, stands for every emotion. The divine gift of speech, by which it was designed that men should express their thoughts, and so continually lead upwards their fellow-creatures, becomes in their case a vehicle for profane ejaculation, so that they are little better than the monkeys on the branches.

Will, therefore, swore vehemently. This made no impression upon his assailants. He therefore swore again. He then asked what sort of treatment this was for a gentleman to receive. Sir Miles reminded him that he had offended against the good manners expected of gentlemen at a watering-place, and that he could no longer fairly be treated as belonging to the polite class.

'Indeed,' he explained, 'we have gravely considered the matter, my lord and myself, and have come to the conclusion that although, for the sake of your most worthy father, we were ready to admonish as a gentleman (though in this open and public manner, as the offence required), yet we cannot consider your case to be deserving of

any better treatment than that of a common, unruly porter, carter, or labouring man, who must be brought to his senses by reason of blows, cuffs, and kicks. Know, then, that although this Terrace is open to all who comport themselves with civility, decency, and consideration for others, it is no place for brawlers, strikers, and disturbers of the peace. Wherefore, four stout men, or if that is not enough, six, will be told off to drive you from the Terrace whenever you appear again upon it armed with that great stick, or upon the least offer to fight any gentleman of the company. I believe, sir, that you are no fool, and that you perfectly understand what we mean, and that we do mean it. Wherefore, be advised in time, and if you do not retreat altogether from the Wells, be persuaded to study the customs of polite society.'

This was a long speech for Sir Miles, but it was delivered with an authority and dignity which made me regret that such good abilities should have been thrown away at the gaming-table.

Will swore again at this. Then, observ-

ing that many of the bystanders were laughing, he brandished his cudgel, and talked of knocking out brains, breaking of necks, and so forth, until he was again reminded by Sir Miles, who significantly tapped the hilt of his sword, that Signor Stick was not to be allowed to reign at the Wells. Then he hung his head and swore again.

'It will be best, sir,' said Lord Chudleigh, 'that you come no more to the Terrace or the Assembly Rooms, with or without your cudgel. The Downs are wide and open; there you will doubtless find room for walking, and an audience in the birds for these profane oaths, to which our ladies are by no means accustomed.'

'Let me go, then,' he said sulkily. 'Od rot it—get out of my way, some of you!'

He walked straight down the Terrace, the people making way for him on either hand, with furious looks and angry gestures. He went straight to his stable, where he thrashed a groom for some imaginary offence. Thence he went to the King's Head, where he called for a tankard and offered to fight the best man in the company or for ten miles round, for fifty pounds a side, with quarterstaff,

single-stick, or fists. Then he drank more beer; sat down and called for a pipe: smoked tobacco all the afternoon; and got drunk early in the evening.

But he came no more to the Terrace.

'And now,' said Peggy Baker, 'I hope that we shall see Miss Nancy back again. Doubtless, my lord, the return of that lady, and the more frequent appearance of Miss Pleydell with her, will bring your lordship oftener from Durdans.'

I have already mentioned our poets at Epsom, and their biting epigrams. Here is another, which was sent to me at this time:

'Kitty, a nymph who fain would climb,
But yet may tumble down,
Her charms she tries with voice and eyes
First on a rustic clown.

'But bumpkin squire won't serve her turn
When gentle Harry woos her,
So farewell Will, for Kitty still
Will laugh, although you lose her.

'Yet higher still than Hal or Will
Her thoughts, ambitious, soar'd:
"Go, Will and Hal: my promise shall
Be transferred to my Lord."'

I suppose the verses were written at the request of Peggy Baker; but after all they did me very little harm, and, indeed, nothing could do me any more good or harm at Epsom any more, because my visit was brought to a sudden close by an event which, as will be seen, might have been most disastrous for us all.

The selfishness and boorish behaviour of Will Levett not only kept us from walking on the Terrace in the afternoon, but also kept poor Nancy at home altogether. She would either come to our lodgings and sit with me lamenting over her bumpkin brother, or she would sit at home when Sir Robert was testy and her ladyship querulous, throwing the blame of her son's rudeness sometimes upon her husband, who, she said, had never whipped the boy as he ought to have been whipped, in accordance with express Scripture orders strictly laid down; or upon Nancy, whose pert tongue and saucy ways had driven him from the Hall to the kennel; or upon myself, who was so ungrateful, after all that had been done for me, as to refuse her son, in spite of all his protestations of affection. It was hard

upon poor Nancy, the ordinary butt and victim of her brother's ill-temper, that she should be taunted with being the cause of it; and one could not but think that had madam been more severe with her son at the beginning, things might have gone better. When a mother allows her son from the very beginning to have all his own way, it is weak in the father to suffer it: but she must not then turn round when the mischief is done, and reproach her daughter, who took no part in the first mischief, with being the cause of it; nor should she call a girl ungrateful for refusing to marry a man whose vices are so prominent and conspicuous that they actually prevent his virtues from being discerned. Beneath that smock-frock, so to speak, that village rusticity, behind that blunt speech and rough manner, there may have been the sound kind heart of a gentleman, but the girl could not take that for granted. The sequel proved indeed that she was right in refusing, even had she been free; for Will died, as he lived, a profligate and a drunkard of the village kind. So that even his poor mother was at last fain to acknowledge that

he was a bad and wicked man, and but for some hope derived from his death-bed, would have gone in sorrow to her dying day.

'I must say, Kitty,' said Lady Levett to me, 'that I think a little kindness from you might work wonders with our Will. And he a boy of such a good heart!'

'He wants so much of me, madam,' I replied. 'With all respect, I cannot give him what he asks, because I cannot love him.'

'He says, child, that you promised him.'

'Indeed, madam, I did not. I was in sorrow and lamentation over my father's death and my departure from kind friends, when first Harry and then Will came, and one after the other said words of which I took no heed. Yet when I saw them again, they both declared that I was promised to them. Now, madam, could a girl promise to two men within half an hour?'

'I know not. Girls will do anything,' said Lady Levett, bitterly. 'Yet it passes my understanding to know how the two boys could be so mistaken. And yet you will take neither. What! would nothing serve you short of a coronet?'

I made no reply.

'Tell me then, girl, will Lord Chudleigh marry thee? It is a great condescension of him, and a great thing for a penniless young woman.'

'He will marry me, madam,' I replied, blushing, and thinking of what I had first to tell him.

She sighed.

'Well, I would he had cast his eyes on Nancy! Yet I say not, Kitty, that a coronet will be too heavy for thy head to wear. Some women are born to be great ladies. My Nancy must content herself with some simple gentleman. Go, my dear. I must try to persuade this headstrong boy to reason.'

'Persuade him if you can, madam,' I said, 'to leave Epsom and go home. He will come to harm in this place. Two or three of the gentlemen have declared that they will follow the example of Lord Chudleigh and Sir Miles Lackington, and wear swords, although that is against the rules of the Wells, in order to punish him for his rudeness should he venture again to shake his cudgel in the

faces of the visitors, which he has done already to their great discomfiture.'

I know not if his mother tried to persuade him, but I do know that he did not leave Epsom, and that the evil thing which I had prophesied, not knowing how true my words might be, did actually fall upon him. This shows how careful one should be in foretelling disasters, even if they seem imminent. And indeed, having before one the experiences of maturity, it seems as if it would be well did a new order of prophets and prophetesses arise with a message of joy and comfort, instead of disaster and misery, such as the message which poor Cassandra had to deliver.

Now, when my lord had given poor Will the warning of which I have told, he retired ashamed and angry, but impenitent, to those obscure haunts where tobacco is continually offered as incense to the gods of rusticity. Here he continued to sit, smoked pipes, drank beer, and cudgelled stable-boys to his heart's content; while we, being happily quit of him, came forth again without fear.

Nancy, however, assured me that some-

thing would happen before her brother, whose stubbornness and masterful disposition were well known to her, relinquished his pursuit and persecution of the woman on whom he had set his heart.

'My dear,' she said, 'I know Will, as you do, of old. Was there ever a single thing which he desired that he did not obtain? Why, when he was a child and cried for the moon they brought him a piece of green cheese, which they told him was cut from the moon on purpose for him to eat. Was he ever crossed in anything? Has there ever been a single occasion on which he gave up any enjoyment or desire out of consideration for another person? Rather, when he has gone among his equals has he not become an object of scorn and hatred? He made no friends at school, nor any at Cambridge, from which place of learning he was, as you know, disgracefully expelled; the gentlemen of the county will not associate with him except on the hunting-field—you know all this, Kitty. Think, then, since he has made up his mind to marry a girl; since he has bragged about his condescension, as he con-

siders it; since he has promised his pot-companion to bring home a wife, how great must be his rage and disappointment. He will *do something*, Kitty. He is desperate.'

What, however, could he do? He came not near our lodgings; he made no sign of any evil intention; but he did not go away.

'He is desperate,' repeated Nancy. 'He cares little about you, but he thinks of his own reputation. And, my dear, do not think because Will, poor boy, is a sot and a clown that he does not think of his reputation. His hobby is to be thought a man who can and will have his own way. He has openly bragged about the country, and even among his boozing companions at Epsom, that he will marry you. Therefore, oh! my dear, be careful. Go not forth alone, or without a gentleman or two, after dark. For I believe that Will would do anything, anything, for the sake of what he calls his honour. For, Kitty, to be laughed at would be the death-blow to his vanity. He knows that he is ignorant and boorish, but he consoles himself with the thought that he is strong.'

What, I repeated, being uneasy more than a little, could he do?

At first I thought of asking Harry Temple quietly to watch over Will and bring me news if anything was in the wind; but that would not do either, because one could not ask Harry to act the part of a spy. Next, I thought that I had only to ask for a body-guard of the young men at the Wells to get a troop for my protection; but what a presumption would this be! Finally, I spoke my fears to Sir Robert, begging him not to tell madam what I had said.

'Courage, Kitty!' said Sir Robert Levett. 'Will is a clown, for which we have to thank our own indulgence. Better had it been to break a thousand good ash-saplings over his back, than to see him as he is. Well, the wise man says: "The father of a fool hath no joy." Yet Will is of gentle blood, and I cannot doubt that he will presently yield and go away patiently.'

'Have you asked him, sir?'

'Child, I ask him daily, for his mother's sake and for Nancy's, to go away and leave us in peace. But I have no control over

him. He doth but swear and call for more ale. His mother also daily visits him, and gets small comfort thereby. His heart is hard and against us all.'

'Then, sir, if Mrs. Esther will consent, one cause of his discontent shall be removed, for we will go away to London where he will not be able to find us.'

'Yes, Kitty,' he replied. 'That will be best. Yet who would ever have thought I could wish our sweet tall Kitty to go away from us!'

The sweet tall Kitty could not but burst out crying at such tenderness from her old friend and protector.

'Forgive me, sir,' I said, while he kissed me and patted my cheek as if I was a child again. 'Forgive me, sir, that I cannot marry Will, as he would wish.'

'Child!' he exclaimed, starting to his feet in a paroxysm of passion. 'God forgive me for saying so, but I would rather see a girl I loved in her grave than married to my son!'

We then held a consultation, Lord Chudleigh being of the party; and it was resolved

that we should return to London without delay and without acquainting any at the Wells with our intention, which was to be carried into effect as soon as we could get our things put together; in fact, in two days' time.

So secret were our preparations that we did not even tell Nancy, and were most careful to let no suspicion enter the head of Cicely Crump, a towncrier of the busiest and loudest, who was, besides, continually beset by the young gallants, seeking through her, to convey letters, poems, and little gifts to me. Yet so faithful was the girl, as I afterwards found out, and so fond of me, that I might safely have trusted her with any secret.

(Soon after the events which I am now to relate, I took Cicely into my service as still-room maid. She remained with me for four years, being ever the same merry, faithful, and talkative wench. She then, by my advice, married the curate of the parish, to whom she made as good a wife as she had been a servant, and brought up eleven children, four of them being twins, in the fear of God and the love of duty.)

We were to depart on Friday, the evening being chosen so that Master Will should not be able to see us go. Lord Chudleigh and Sir Miles promised to ride with our coach all the way to London for protection. I have often remembered since that Friday is ever an unlucky day to begin upon. Had we made the day Thursday, for instance, we should have gotten safely away without the thing which happened.

On Thursday afternoon we repaired to the Terrace as usual, I rather sad at thinking that my reign as Queen of the Wells would soon be over, and wondering whether the future could have any days in store for me so happy as those which a kind Providence had already bestowed upon me. There was to be a dance at six, and a tea at five. About four of the clock, Nancy and I, accompanied only by Mr. Stallabras, sauntered away from the Terrace and took the road leading to the Downs. Nancy afterwards told me that she had noticed a carriage with four horses waiting under the trees between the Terrace and the King's Head, which, on our leaving the crowd, slowly followed us along the road;

but she thought nothing of this at the time.

Mr. Stallabras, with gallant and consequential air, ambled beside us, his hat under his arm, his snuff-box in his left hand, and his cane dangling from his right wrist. He was, as usual, occupied with his own poetry, which, indeed, through the interest of the brewer's widow (whom he subsequently married), seemed about to become the fashion. I thought, then, that it was splendid poetry, but I fear, now, that it must have been what Dr. Johnson once called a certain man's writing, 'terrible skimble skamble stuff;' in other words, poor Solomon Stallabras had the power of imitation, and would run you off rhymes as glibly as monkey can peel cocoa-nuts (according to the reports of travellers), quite in the style of Pope. Yet the curious might look in vain for any thought above the common, or any image which had not been used again and again. Such poets, though they hand down the lamp, do not, I suppose, greatly increase the poetic reputation of their country.

'It seems a pity, Mr. Stallabras,' I was

saying, 'that you, who are so fond of singing about the purling stream and the turtles cooing in the grove, do not know more about the familiar objects of the country. Here is this little flower'—only a humble crane's-bill, yet a beautiful flower—'you do not, I engage, know its name?'

He did not.

'Observe, again, the spreading leaves of yonder great tree. You do not, I suppose, know its name?'

He did not. A common beech it was, yet as stately as any of those which may be seen near Farnham Royal, or in Windsor Forest.

'And listen! there is a bird whose note, I dare swear, you do not know?'

He did not. Would you believe that it was actually the voice of the very turtle-dove of which he was so fond?

'The Poet,' he explained, not at all abashed by the display of so much ignorance —'the Poet should not fetter his mind with the little details of nature: he dwells in his thought remote from their consideration: a flower is to him a flower, which is associated with the grove and the purling stream: a

shepherd gathers a posy of flowers for his nymph: a tree is a tree which stands beside the stream to shelter the swain and his goddess: the song of one bird is as good as the song of another, provided it melodiously echoes the sighs of the shepherd. As for——'

Here we were interrupted. The post-chaise drove rapidly up the road and overtook us. As we turned to look, it stopped, and two men jumped out of it, armed with cudgels. Nancy seized my arm: 'Kitty! Will is in the carriage!' I will do Solomon Stallabras justice. He showed himself, though small of stature and puny of limb, as courageous as a lion. He was armed with nothing but his cane, but with this he flew upon the ruffians who rushed to seize me, and beat, struck, clung, and kicked in my defence. Nancy threw herself upon me and shrieked, crying, that if they carried me away, they should drag her too. While we struggled, I saw the evil face of Will looking out of the carriage: it was distorted by every evil passion: he cried to the men to murder Solomon: he threatened his sister to kill her unless she let go: he

called to me that it would be worse for me unless I came quiet. Then he sprang from the carriage himself, having originally purposed, I suppose, to take no part in the fray, and with his cudgel dealt Solomon such a blow upon his head that he fell senseless in the road. After this he seized Nancy, his own sister, dragged her from me, swore at the men for being cowardly lubbers, and, while they threw me into the carriage, he hurled his sister shrieking and crying on the prostrate form of the poor poet, and sprang into the carriage after me.

'Run!' he cried to the two men; 'off with you both, different ways. If you get caught, it will be the worse for you.'

We were half way up the hill which leads from the town to the Downs; in fact, we were not very far above the Doctor's house, but there was a wind in the road, so that had his men been looking out of his doors they could not have seen what was being done, though they might have heard almost on the Terrace the cries, the dreadful imprecations, and the shrieks of Nancy and myself.

They had thrown me upon the seat with

such violence that I was breathless for a few moments, as well as sick and giddy with the dreadful scene—it lasted but half a minute—which I had witnessed. Yet as Will leaped in after me and gave the word to drive on, I saw lying in the dust of the road the prostrate and insensible form of poor Solomon and my faithful, tender Nancy, who had so fought and wrestled with the villains, not with any hope that she could beat them off, but in order to gain time, lying half over the body of the Poet, half on the open road. Alas! the road at this time was generally deserted; there was no one to rescue, though beyond the tall elms upon our right lay the gardens and park of Durdans, where my lord was walking at that moment, perhaps, meditating upon his wretched Kitty.

As for my companion, his face resembled that of some angry devil, moved by every evil passion at once. If I were asked to depict the worst face I ever saw, I should try to draw the visage of this poor boy. He could not speak for passion. He was in such a rage that his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. He could not even swear.

He could only splutter. For a while he sat beside me ejaculating at intervals disjointed words, while his angry eyes glared about the coach, and his red cheeks flamed with wrath.

The Downs were quite deserted: not even a shepherd was in sight. We drove along a road which I knew well, a mere track across the grass: the smooth turf was easy for the horses, and we were travelling at such a pace that it seemed impossible for anyone to overtake us.

My heart sank, yet I bade myself keep up courage. With this wild beast at my side it behoved me to show no sign of terror.

Every woman has got two weapons, one provided by Nature, the other by Art. The first is the one which King Solomon had ever in his mind when he wrote the Book of Proverbs (which should be the guide and companion of every young man). Certainly he had so many wives that he had more opportunities than fall to the lot of most husbands (who have only the experience of one) of knowing the power of a woman's tongue. He says he would rather dwell in

the wilderness than with an angry woman: in the corner of the house-top than with a brawling woman. (Yet the last chapter of the book is in praise of the wise woman.) I had, therefore, my tongue. Next I had a pair of scissors, so that if my fine gentleman attempted the least liberty, I could, and would, give him such a stab with the sharp points as would admonish him to good purpose. But mostly I relied upon my tongue, knowing of old that with this weapon Will was easily discomfited.

Presently, the cool air of the Downs blowing upon his cheeks, Will became somewhat soothed, and his ejaculations became less like angry words used as interjections. I sat silent, taking no notice of what he said, and answering nothing to any of his wild speeches. But be sure that I kept one eye upon the window, ready to shriek if any passer-by appeared.

The angry interjections settled down into sentences, and Will at last became able to put some of his thoughts into words.

He began a strange, wild, rambling speech, during which I felt somewhat sorry for him.

It was such a speech as an Indian savage might have made when roused to wrath by the loss of his squaw.

He bade me remember that he had known me from infancy, that he had always been brought up with me. I had therefore a first duty to perform in the shape of gratitude to him (for being a child with him in the same village). Next he informed me that having made up his mind to marry me, nothing should stop him, because nothing ever did stop him in anything he proposed to do, and if anyone tried to stop him he always knocked down that man first, and when he had left him for dead, he then went and did the thing. This, he said, was well known. Very well, then. Did I dare, then, he asked, knowing as I did full well this character of his for resolution, to fly in the face of that knowledge and throw him over? What made the matter, he argued, a case of the blackest ingratitude was that I had thrown him over for a lord: a poor, chicken-hearted, painted lord, whom he, for his own part, could knock down at a single blow. He would now, therefore, show me what my new friends were worth.

Here I was, boxed up in the carriage with him, safe and sound, not a soul within hail, being driven merrily across country to a place he knew of, where I should find a house, a parson, and a prayer-book. With these before me I might, if I pleased, yelp and cry for my lord and his precious friend, Sir Miles Lackington. They would be far enough away, with their swords and their mincing ways. When I was married they might come and —what was I laughing at?

I laughed, in fact, because I remembered another weapon. As a last resource I could proclaim to the clergyman that I was already a wife, the wife of Lord Chudleigh. I knew enough of the clergy to be certain that although a man might be here and there found among them capable of marrying a woman against her will, just as men are found among them who, to please their patrons, will drink with them, go cock-fighting with them, and in every other way forget the sacred duties of their calling, yet not one among them all, however bad, would dare to marry again a woman already married. Therefore I laughed.

A London profligate would, perhaps, have

got a man to personate a clergyman; but this wickedness, I was sure, would not enter into the head of simple Will Levett. It was as much as he could devise—and that was surely a good deal—to bribe some wretched country curate to be waiting for us at our journey's end, to marry us on the spot. When I understood this I laughed again, thinking what a fool Will would look when he was thwarted again.

'Zounds, madam! I see no cause for laughing.'

'I laugh, Will,' I said, 'because you are such a fool. As for you, unless you order your horses' heads to be turned round, and drive me instantly back to Epsom, you will not laugh, but cry.'

To this he made no reply, but whistled. Now to whistle when a person gives you serious advice, is in Kent considered a contemptuous reply.

'Ah!' he went on, 'sly as you were, I have been too many for you. It was you who set the two bullies, your great lord and your baronet, on me with their swords—made all the people laugh at me. You shall pay for

it all. It was you set Nancy crying and scolding upon me enough to give a man a fit; it was you, I know, set my father on to me. Says if he cannot cut me off with a shilling, he will sell the timber, ruin the estate, and let me starve so long as he lives. Let 'un! let 'un! let 'un, I say! All of you do your worst. Honest Will Levett will do what he likes, and have what he likes. Bull-dog Will! Hold-fast Will! Tear-'em Will! By the Lord! there isn't a man in the country can get the better of him. Oh, I know your ways! Wait till I've married you. Then butter won't melt in your mouth. Then it will be, "Dear Will! kind Will! sweet Will! best of husbands and of men!"—oh! I know what you are well enough. Why—after all—what is one woman that she should set herself above other women? Take off your powder and your patches and your hoops, how are you better than Blacksmith's Sue? Answer me that. And why do I take all this trouble about you, to anger my father and spite my mother, when Blacksmith's Sue would make as good a wife—ay! a thousand times better—because she can bake and brew, and shoe a horse and mend a

cracked crown, and fight a game-cock, and teach a ferret, and train a tarrier or a bull-pup, whereas you—what are you good for, but to sit about and look grand, and come over the fellows with your make-pretence, false, lying, whimsy-flimsy ways, your smilin' looks when a lord is at your heels, and your "Oh, fie! Will," if it's only an old friend. Why, I say? Because I've told my friends that I'm going to bring you home my wife, and my honour's at stake. Because I am one as will have his will, spite of 'em all. Because I don't love you, not one bit, since I found you out for what you are, a false, jiltin' jade; and I value the little finger of Sue more than your whole body, tall as you are, and fine as you think yourself. Oh! by the Lord——'

I am sorry I cannot give the whole of his speech, which was too coarse and profane to be written down for polite eyes to read. Suffice it to say that it included every form of wicked word or speech known to the rustics of Kent, and that he threatened me, in the course of it, with every kind of cruelty that he could think of, counting as nothing a

horsewhipping every day until I became cheerful. Now, to horsewhip your wife every day, in order to make her cheerful, seems like starving your horse in order to make him more spirited; or to flog an ignorant boy in order to make him learned; or to kick your dog in order to make him love you. Perhaps he did not mean quite all that he said; but one cannot tell, because his friends were chiefly in that rank of life where it is considered a right and honourable thing to beat a wife, cuff a son, and kick a daughter, and even the coarsest boor of a village will have obedience from the wretched woman at his beck and call. I think that Will would have belaboured his wife with the greatest contentment, and as a pious duty, in order to make her satisfied with her lot, cheerful over her duties, and merry at heart at the contemplation of so good a husband. 'A wife, a dog, and a walnut-tree, the harder you flog them, the better they be.' There are plenty of Solomon's Proverbs in favour of flogging a child, but none, that I know of, which recommend the flogging of a wife.

Blacksmith Sam, Will said, in his own

village, the father of the incomparable Sue, used this method to tame his wife, with satisfactory results, and Pharaoh, his own keeper, was at that very time engaged upon a similar course of discipline with his partner. What, he explained, is good for such as those women is good for all. 'Beat 'em and thrash 'em till they follow to heel like a well-bred retriever. Keep the stick over 'em till such times as they become as meek as an old cow, and as obedient as a sheep-dog.'

While he was still pouring forth these maxims for my information and encouragement my heart began to beat violently, because I heard (distantly at first) the hoofs of horses behind us. Will went on, hearing and suspecting nothing, growing louder and louder in his denunciation of women, and the proper treatment of them.

The hoofs drew nearer. Presently they came alongside. I looked out. One on each side of our carriage, there rode Lord Chudleigh and Sir Miles Lackington.

But I laughed no longer, for I saw before me the advent of some terrible thing, and a dreadful trembling seized me. My lord's

face was stern, and Sir Miles, for the first time in my recollection, was grave and serious, as one who hath a hard duty to perform. So mad was poor headstrong Will that he neither heard them nor, for a while, saw them, but continued his swearing and raving.

They called aloud to the postilions to stop the horses. This it was that roused Will, and he sprang to his feet with a yell of rage, and thrusting his head out of the window, bawled to the boys to drive faster, faster! They whipped and spurred their horses. My lord said nothing, but rode on, keeping up with the carriage.

'Stop!' cried Sir Miles.

'Go on!' cried Will.

Sir Miles drew a pistol and deliberately cocked it.

'If you will not stop,' he cried, holding his pistol to the postboy's head, 'I will fire!'

'Go on!' cried Will. 'Go on; he dares not fire.'

The fellow—I knew him for a stable-boy whose life at the Hall had been one long

series of kicks, cuffs, abuse, and horse-whippings at the hands of his young master—ducked his head between his shoulders, and put up his elbows, as if that which had so often protected him when Will was enforcing discipline by the help of Father Stick, would avail him against a pistol-shot. But he obeyed his master, mostly from force of habit, and spurred his horse.

Sir Miles changed the direction of the pistol, and leaning forward, discharged the contents in the head of the horse which the boy was riding. The poor creature bounded forward and fell dead.

There was a moment of confusion; the flying horses stumbled and fell, the boys were thrown from their saddles: the carriage was stopped suddenly.

Then, what followed happened all in a moment. Yet it is a moment which to me is longer than any day of my life, because the terror of it has never left me, and because in dreams it comes back to me. Ah! what a prophetess was Nancy when she said that some dreadful thing would happen before all was over, unless Will went away!

Sir Miles and my lord sprang to their feet. Will, with a terrible oath, leaped forth from the carriage. For a moment he stood glaring from one to the other like a wild beast brought to bay. He *was* a wild beast. Then he raised his great cudgel and rushed at my lord.

'You!' he cried; 'you are the cause of it. I will beat out your brains!'

Lord Chudleigh leaped lightly aside, and avoided the blow which would have killed him had it struck his head. Then I saw the bright blade in his hand glisten for a moment in the sunlight, and then Will fell backwards with a cry, and lay lifeless on the green turf, while my lord stood above him, drops of red blood trickling down his sword.

'I fear, my lord,' said Sir Miles, 'that you have killed him. Fortunately, I am witness that it was in self-defence.'

'You have killed him! You have killed my master!' cried the stable-boy, whose left arm, which was broken by his fall from the horse, hung helpless at his side. 'You have killed the best master in all the world! Lord or no lord, you shall hang!'

He rushed with his one hand to seize the slayer of his master, this poor faithful slave, whose affections had only grown firmer with every beating. Sir Miles caught him by the coat-collar and dragged him back.

'Quiet, fool! Attend to your master. He is not dead—yet.'

He looked dead. The rage was gone out of his eyes, which were closed, and the blood had left the cheeks, which were pallid. Poor Will never looked so handsome as when he lay, to all seeming, dead.

Lord Chudleigh looked on his prostrate form with a kind of stern sadness. The taking of life, even in such a cause and in self-defence, is a dreadful thing. Like Lamech (who also might have been defending his own life), he had slain a man to his wounding, and a young man to his hurt.

'Kitty,' he said, in a low voice, taking my hand, 'this is a grievous day's work. Yet I regret it not, since I have saved your honour!'

'My lord,' I replied, 'I had the saving of that in my own hands. But you have rescued me from a wild beast, whose end I grieve

over because I knew him when he was yet an innocent boy.'

'Come,' said Sir Miles, 'we must take measures. Here, fellows! come, lift your master.'

The two boys, with his help, lifted Will, who, as they moved him, groaned heavily, into the carriage.

'Now,' said Sir Miles, 'one of you get inside. Lift his head. If—but that is impossible—you come across water, pour a little into his mouth. The other mount, and drive home as quickly as you can.'

I bethought me of my friend the mad doctor, and bade them take their master to his house, which was, as I have said, on the road between the town and the Downs, so that he might be carried there quietly, without causing an immediate scandal in the town.

The fellows were now quite obedient and subdued. Sir Miles, who seemed to know what was to be done, made some sort of splint with a piece of poor Will's cudgel, for the broken arm, which he tied up roughly, and bade the boy be careful to get attended to as soon as his master was served. In that class of life, as is well known, wounds, broken bones, and

even the most cruel surgical operations, are often endured with patience which would equal the most heroic courage, if it were not due to a stupid insensibility. The most sensitive of men are often the most courageous, because they know what it is they are about to suffer.

However, they did as they were told, and presently drove back, the third horse following with a rope.

Then we were left alone, with the blood upon the grass and the dead horse lying beside us.

Sir Miles took my lord's sword from him, wiped it on the turf, and restored it to him.

'Come,' he said, 'we must consider what to do.'

'There is nothing to do,' said Lord Chudleigh, 'except to take Miss Pleydell home again.'

'Pardon me, my lord,' Sir Miles interposed; 'if ever I saw mischief written on any man's face, it was written on the face of that boy. A brave lad, too, and would have driven to the death at his master's command.'

'How can he do harm?' I asked. 'Why,

Sir Miles, you are witness; you saw Will Levett with his cudgel rush upon his lordship, who but drew in self-defence. I am another witness. I hope the simple words of such as you and I would be believed before the oath of a stable-lad.'

'I suppose they would,' he replied. 'Meantime, there is the fact, known to all the company at the Wells, that both you and I, Lord Chudleigh, had publicly informed this unhappy young man, that, under certain circumstances, we would run him through. The circumstances *have* happened, and we *have* run him through. This complication may be unfortunate as regards the minds of that pig-headed institution, a coroner's inquest.'

'Sir!' cried my lord, 'do you suppose—would you have me believe—that this affair might be construed into anything but an act of self-defence?'

'I do indeed,' he replied, gravely; 'and so deeply do I feel it, that I would counsel a retreat into some place where we shall not be suspected, for such a time as may be necessary. If the worst happens, and the man dies, your lordship may surrender yourself—

but in London—not to a country bench. If the man recovers, well and good: you can go abroad again.'

At first my lord would hear nothing of such a plan. Why should he run away? Was it becoming for a man to fly from the laws of his country? Then I put in a word, pointing out that it was one thing for a case to be tried before a jury of ignorant, prejudiced men upon an inquest, and another thing altogether for the case to be tried by a dispassionate and unprejudiced jury. I said, too, that away from this place, the circumstances of the case, the brutal assault upon Solomon Stallabras, whose ribs, it appeared, were broken, as well as his collar-bone, the ferocious treatment of Nancy by her own brother, and my forcible abduction in open daylight, would certainly be considered provocation enough for anything, and a justification (combined with the other circumstances) of the homicide, if unhappily Will should die.

This moved my lord somewhat.

Where, he asked, could he go, so as to lie *perdu* for a few days, or a few weeks, if necessary?

'I have thought upon that,' replied Sir Miles, looking at me with a meaning eye (but I blushed and turned pale, and reddened again). 'I have just now thought of a plan. Your lordship has been there once already; I mean the Rules of the Fleet. Here will I find you lodgings, where no one will look for you; where, if you please to lie hidden for awhile, you may do so in perfect safety; where you may have any society you please, from a baronet out at elbows to a baker in rags, or no society at all, if you please to lie quiet.'

'I like not the place,' said his lordship. 'I have been there it is true once, and it was once too often. Find me another place.'

'I know no other,' Sir Miles replied. 'You must be in London; you must be in some place where no one will suspect you. As for me, I will stay near you, but not with you. There will be some noise over this affair; it will be well for us to be separated, yet not so far but that I can work for you. Come, my lord, be reasonable. The place is dirty and noisy; but what signify dirt and noise when safety is concerned?'

He wavered. The recollection of the place was odious to him. Yet the case was pressing.

He gave way.

'Have it,' he said, 'your own way. Kitty,' he took my hand, 'hopeless as is my case, desperate as is my condition, I am happy in having rescued you, no matter at what cost.'

'Your lordship's case is not so hopeless as mine,' said Sir Miles; 'yet I, too, am happy in having helped to rescue this, the noblest creature in the world.'

The tears were in my eyes as these two men spoke of me in such terms. How could I deserve this worship? By what act, or thought, or prayer, could I raise myself to the level where my lord's imagination had planted me? O Love divine, since it makes men and women long to be angels!

'I mean,' Sir Miles continued, bluntly, 'that since your lordship has found favour in her eyes, your case cannot be hopeless.'

Lord Chudleigh raised my hand to his lips, with a sadness in his eyes of which I alone could discern the cause.

'Gentlemen,' I cried, 'we waste the time in idle compliments. Mount and ride off as

quickly as you may. As for me, it is but three miles across the Downs. I have no fear. I shall meet no one. Mount, I say, and ride to London without more ado.'

They obeyed; they left me standing alone. As my eyes turned from following them, they lighted on the pool of blood—Will's blood, which reddened the turf—and upon the poor dead horse. Then I hastened back across the Downs.

It was a clear, bright evening, the sun yet pretty high. The time was about half-past five; before long the minuets would be beginning in the Assembly Rooms; yet Lady Levett would know—I hoped that she already knew—the dreadful wickedness of her son. Would not, indeed, all the company know it? Would not the assault on Mr. Stallabras and on Nancy be noised abroad?

Indeed, the news had already sped abroad.

Long before I reached the edge of the Downs, I became aware of a crowd of people. They consisted of the whole company, all the visitors at Epsom, who came forth, leaving the public tea and the dance, to meet the girl who had been thus carried away by force.

Harry Temple came forward as soon as I was in sight to meet me. He was very grave.

'Kitty,' he said, 'this is a bad day's work.'

'How is Will? You have seen Will?'

'I fear he is already dead. The doctor to whom you sent him declares that he is dying fast. His mother is with him.'

'Oh, Harry!' I sighed; 'I gave him no encouragement. There was not the least encouragement to believe that I would marry him.'

'No one thinks you did, Kitty; not even his mother. Yet others have been carried away by admiration of your charms to think——'

'Oh! my charms, my charms! Harry, with poor Will at death's door, let us at least be spared the language of compliment.'

By this time we had reached the stream of people. Among them, I am happy to say, was not Peggy Baker. She, at least, did not come out to gaze upon her unhappy rival, for whose sake one gallant gentleman lay bleeding to death, and two others were riding away to hide themselves until the first

storm should be blown over. The rest parted, right and left, and made a lane through which we passed in silence. As I went through, I heard voices whispering: 'Where is Lord Chudleigh? where is Sir Miles? How pale she looks!' and so forth; comments of the crowd which has no heart, no pity, no sympathy. It came out to-day to look upon a woman to whom a great insult had been offered with as little pity as to-morrow it would go to see a criminal flogged from Newgate to Tyburn, or a woman whipped at Bridewell, or a wretched thief beaten before the Alderman, or a batch of rogues hanged. They came to be amused. Amusement, to most people, is the contemplation of other folks' sufferings. If tortures were to be introduced again, if, as happened, we are told, in the time of Nero, Christians could be wrapped in pitch and then set fire to, thus becoming living candles, I verily believe the crowd would rush to see, and would enjoy the spectacle the more, the longer the sufferings of the poor creatures were prolonged.

Solomon Stallabras, Harry told me, was comfortably put into bed, his ribs being set

and his collar-bone properly put in place: there was no doubt that he would do well. Nancy, too, was in bed, sick with the fright she had received, but not otherwise much hurt. Mrs. Esther was wringing her hands and crying at home with Cicely to look after her. Sir Robert and Lady Levett were at the doctor's. It was, I have said, the same doctor who had undertaken the temporary charge of Harry Temple. As we drew near the house—I observed that most of the people remained behind upon the Downs in hopes of seeing the return of Lord Chudleigh, in which hope they were disappointed—Harry became silent.

'Come, Harry,' I said, reading his thoughts, 'you must forgive me for saving your life, or from preventing you from killing Lord Chudleigh. Be reasonable, dear Harry.'

He smiled.

'I have forgiven you long since,' he replied. 'You acted like a woman; that is, you did just what you thought best at the moment. But I cannot, and will not, forgive the man with his impudent smile and his buckets of water.'

'Nay, Harry,' I said, 'he acted according to his profession. Come with me to the house. I cannot even go to Mrs. Esther until I have seen or heard about poor Will.'

The doctor was coming from the sick man's chamber when we came to the house. They had placed Will in one of the private rooms, away from the dreadful gallery where the madmen were chained to the wall. With him were Lady Levett and Sir Robert.

The doctor coughed in his most important manner.

'Your obedient servant, Miss Pleydell. Sir, your most obedient, humble servant. You are come, no doubt, to inquire after the victim of this most unhappy affair. Poor Mr. William Levett, I grieve to say, is in a most precarious condition—a most precarious condition.'

'Can nothing save him? Oh, doctor!'

'Nothing can save him, young lady,' he replied, 'but a miracle. That miracle—I call it nothing short—is sometimes granted by beneficent Providence to youth and strength only when—I say only when—their

possession is aided by the very highest medical skill that the country can produce. I say the very highest; no mere pretender will avail.'

'Indeed, doctor, we have that skill, I doubt not, in yourself.'

'I say nothing,'—he bowed and spread his hands—'I say nothing. It is not for me to speak.'

'And, sir,' said Harry, 'you are doubtless aware that Sir Robert is a gentleman of a considerable estate, and that—in fact—you may expect——'

'Sir Robert,' he replied, with a smile which speedily, in spite of all his efforts, broadened into a grin of satisfaction, 'has already promised that no expense shall be spared, no honorarium be considered too large if I give him back his son. Yet we can but do our best. Science is strong, but a poke of cold steel in the inwards is, if you please, stronger still.'

'Will you let me see Sir Robert?' I asked.

The doctor stole back to the room, and presently Sir Robert came forth.

He kissed me on the forehead while his tears fell upon my head.

'My dear,' he said, 'I ask your pardon in the name of my headstrong son. We have held an honoured name for five hundred years and more: in all that time no deed so dastardly has been attempted by any one of our house. Yet the poor wretch hath paid dearly for his wickedness.'

'Oh, sir!' I cried, 'there is no reason why you should speak of forgiveness, who have ever been so kind to me. Poor Will will repent and be very good when he recovers.'

'I think,' said his father, sadly, 'that he will not recover. Go, child. Ask not to see the boy's mother, because women are unreasonable in their grief, and she might perchance say things of which she would afterwards be ashamed. Go to Mrs. Pimpernel, and tell her of thy safety.'

This was, indeed, all that could be done. Yet, after allaying the terrors and soothing the agitated spirits of Mrs. Esther, whose imagination had conjured up, already, the fate of Clarissa, and who saw in headstrong Will another Lovelace, without, to be sure,

the graces and attractions of that dreadful monster, I went to inquire after my gallant little Poet.

He was lying on his bed, with orders not to move, and wrapped up like a baby.

I thanked him for his brave defence, which I said would have been certainly efficacious, had it not been for the cowardly blow on the back of his head. I further added, that no man in the world could have behaved more resolutely, or with greater courage.

'This day,' he said, 'has been the reward for a Poet's devotion. In those bowers, Miss Kitty, when first we met'— the bower was the Fleet Market, 'beside that stream'—the Fleet Ditch—'where the woodland choir was held'—the clack of the poultry about to be killed—'and the playful lambs frisked'—on their way to the butchers of Newgate Street, —'I dared to love a goddess who was as much too high for me as ever Beatrice was for her Italian worshipper. I refer not to the disparity of birth, because (though brought up in a hosier's shop) the Muse, you have acknowledged, confers nobility. An attorney is by right of his calling styled a gentleman;

but a Poet, by right of his genius, is equal of —ay, even of Lord Chudleigh.'

'Surely, dear sir,' I replied, 'no one can refuse the highest title of distinction to a gentleman of your merit and genius.'

'But I think,' he went on, 'of that disparity which consists in virtue and goodness. That can never be removed. How happy, therefore, ought I to be in feeling that I have helped to preserve an angel from the hands of those barbarous monsters who would have violated such a sanctuary. What are these wounds!—a broken rib—a cracked collar-bone—a bump on the back of the head? I wish they had been broken legs and arms in your service.'

I laughed—but this devotion, more than half of it being real, touched my heart. The little poet, conceited, vain, sometimes foolish, was ennobled, not by his genius, of which he thought so much, but by his great belief in goodness and virtue. Women should be humble when they remember, that if a good man loves them it is not, in very truth, the woman (who is a poor creature full of imperfections) that they love, but the soul—the

noble, pure, exalted soul, as high as their own grandest conception of goodness and piety, which they believe to be in her. How can we rise to so great a height? How can we, without abasement, pretend to such virtue? How can we be so wicked and so cruel as, after marriage, to betray to our husbands the real littleness of our souls? As my lord believed me to be, so might I (then I prayed) rise to heaven in very truth, and even soar to higher flights.

Now, when I reached home, a happy thought came to me. I knew the name of Solomon's latest patron, the brewer's widow. I sat down and wrote her a letter. I said that I thought it my simple duty to inform her, although I had not the honour of her friendship, that the Poet whom she had distinguished with her especial favour and patronage, was not in a position to pay her his respects, either by letter, or by verse, or in person, being at that time ill in bed with ribs and other bones broken in defence of a lady. And to this I added, so that she might not grow jealous, which one must always guard against in dealing with women,

that he was walking with two ladies, not one, and that the gallantry he showed in defence of her who was attacked was so great that not even a lover could have displayed more courage for his mistress than he did for this lady (myself), who was promised to another gentleman. Nor was it, I added, until he was laid senseless on the field that the ravishers were able to carry off the lady, who was immediately afterwards rescued by two friends of the Poet, Lord Chudleigh and Sir Miles Lackington.

This crafty letter, which was all true, and yet designedly exaggerated, as when I called my lord Solomon's friend, produced more than the effect which I desired. For the widow, who was in London, came down to Epsom the next day, in a carriage and four, to see the hero. Now, she was still young, and comely as well as rich. Therefore, when she declared to him that no woman could resist such a combination of genius and heroic courage, Solomon could only reply that he would rush into her arms with all a lover's rapture, as soon as his ribs permitted an embrace. In short, within a month they

were married at Epsom Church, and Solomon, though he wrote less poetry in after years than his friends desired, lived in great comfort and happiness, having a wife of sweet temper, who thought him the noblest and most richly endowed of men, and a brewery whose vats produced him an income far beyond his wants, though these expanded as time went on.

As for Nancy, she was little hurt, save for the fright and the shame of it. Yet her brother, the cause of all, was lying dangerously wounded, and she could not for very pity speak her mind upon his wickedness.

The company, I learned from Cicely, were greatly moved about it: the public Tea had been broken up in confusion, while all sallied forth to the scene of outrage; nor was the assembly resumed when it was discovered that Will Levett had been run through the body by Lord Chudleigh, and was now lying at the point of death.

In the morning Cicely went early to inquire at the doctor's. Alas! Will was in a high fever; Lady Levett had been sitting with him all night; it was not thought that

he would live through the day. I put on my hood and went to see Nancy.

'Oh my dear, dear Kitty!' she cried; 'sure we shall all go distracted. You have heard what they say? Poor Will is in a bad way indeed; the fever is so high that the doctor declares his life to be in hourly danger. He is delirious, and in his dreams he knows not what he says, so that you would fancy him among his dogs or in his stables — where, indeed, it hath been his chief delight to dwell—or with the rustics with whom he would drink. It is terrible, my father says, that one so near his end, who must shortly appear before his Maker, should thus blaspheme and swear such horrid oaths. If we could only ensure him half an hour of sense, even with pain, so that the clergyman might exhort him. Alas! our Will hath led so shocking a life—my dear, I know more of his ways than he thinks—that I doubt his conscience and his heart are hardened. Oh, Kitty! to think that yesterday we were happy, and that this evil thing had not befallen us! And now I can never go abroad again without thinking that the folk are saying: "There

goes the sister of the man who was killed while trying to carry off the beautiful Miss Pleydell."'

No comfort can be found for one who sits expectant of a brother's death. I bade poor Nancy keep up her heart and hope for the best.

The fever increased during the day, we heard, and the delirium. We stirred not out of the house save for morning prayers, sending Cicely from time to time to ask the news. And all the company gathered together on the Terrace, not to talk scandal or tell idle stories of each other, but to whisper that Will Levett was certainly dying, and that it would go hard with Lord Chudleigh, who would without doubt be tried for murder, the two grooms protesting stoutly that their master had not struck a blow.

In the evening Sir Robert Levett came to our lodging. He was heavily afflicted with the prospect of losing his only son, albeit not a son of whom a parent could be proud. Yet a child cannot be replaced, and the line of the Levetts would be extinguished.

'My dear,' he said, 'I come to say a thing

which has been greatly on my mind. My son was run through by Lord Chudleigh. Tell me, first, what there is between you and my lord? Doth he propose to marry you?'

'Dear sir,' I replied, 'Lord Chudleigh has offered me his hand.'

'And you have taken it?'

'Unworthy as I am, dear sir, I have promised, should certain obstacles be removed, to marry him.'

'His sword has caused my Will's death. Yet the act was done in defence of the woman he loved, the woman whom Will designed to ruin——'

'And in self-defence as well. Had he not drawn, Will would have beaten out his brains.'

'Tell him, from Will's father, my dear, that I forgive him. Let not such a homicide dwell upon his conscience. Where is he?'

'He has gone away with Sir Miles Lackington to await the finding of an inquest, if——'

'Tell him that I will not sanction any proceedings, and if there is to be an inquest my evidence shall be, though it bring my

grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, that my lord is innocent, and drew his sword to defend his own life.'

He left me—poor man!—to return to the sick bedside.

He had been gone but a short time when a post-boy rode to the door, blowing a horn. It was a special messenger, who had ridden from Temple Bar with a letter from Sir Miles.

'Sweet Kitty,' wrote the baronet, 'I write this to tell thee that we have taken up quarters in London. I have bestowed my lord in certain lodgings, which you know, above the room where once I lay.' Heavens! my lord was in my own old lodging beside the Fleet Market. 'He is downhearted, thinking of the life he has taken. I tell him that he should think no more of running through such a madman in defence of his own life than of killing a pig. Pig, and worse than pig was the creature who dared to carry off the lovely Kitty. To think that such a rustic clown should be brother of pretty Nancy! I have sent to my lord's lodging an

agreeable dinner and a bottle of good wine, with which I hope my lord will comfort his heart. Meantime, they know not, in the house, the rank and quality of their guest. I suppose the fellow is dead by this time. If there is an inquest I shall attend to give my evidence, and the verdict can be none other than justifiable homicide or even *felo-de-se,* for if ever man rushed upon his death it was Will Levett. I have also sent him paper and pens with which to write to you, and some books, and a pack of cards. Here is enough to make a lonely man happy. If he wants more he can look out of the window and see the porters and fishwives of the market fight, which was a spectacle daily delighted me for two years and more. The Doctor is well. I have informed him privately of the circumstances of the case, and Lord Chudleigh's arrival. He seemed pleased, but I took the liberty of warning him against betraying to my lord a relationship, the knowledge of which might be prejudicial to your interests.'

Prejudicial to my interests !

Sir Miles was in league, with me, to hide

this thing from a man who believed, like Solomon Stallabras, that I was all truth and goodness.

I had borne so much from this wicked concealment that I was resolved to bear it no longer. I said to myself, almost in the words of the Prayer-book: 'I will arise and go unto my lord. I will say, forgive me, for thus and thus have I done, and so am I guilty.'

Oh, my noble lord! Oh, great heart and true! what am I, wicked and deceitful woman, that I should hope to keep thy love? Let it go; tell me that you can never love again one who has played this wicked part; let hatred and loathing take the place of love; let all go, and leave me a despairing wretch—so that I have confessed my sin and humbled myself even to the ground before him whom I have so deeply wronged.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW KITTY WENT TO LONDON.

Oppressed with this determination, which left no room for any other thought, I urged upon Mrs. Esther the necessity of going to London at once, as we had resolved to do before the accident. I pointed out to her that, after the dreadful calamity which had befallen us—for which most certainly no one could blame us—we could take no more pleasure in the gaieties of Epsom ; that we could enjoy no longer the light talk, the music, and the dancing ; that the shadow of Death had fallen over the place, so far as we were concerned ; that we could not laugh while Nancy was weeping ; and that—in short, my lord was in London and I must needs go too.

'There are a hundred good reasons,' said Mrs. Esther, 'why we should go away at once; and you have named the very best of all. But, dear child, I would not seem to be pursuing his lordship.'

'Indeed,' I replied, 'there will be no pursuing of him. Oh, dear madam, I should be'—and here I burst into tears—'the happiest of women if I were not the most anxious.'

She thought I meant that I was anxious about Will's recovery; but this was no longer the foremost thing in my thoughts, much as I hoped that he would get better—which seemed now hopeless.

'Let us go, dear madam, and at once. Let us leave this place, which will always be remembered by me as the scene of so much delight as well as so much pain. I must see my lord as soon as I can. For oh! there are obstacles in the way which I must try to remove, or be a wretched woman for ever.'

'Child,' said Mrs. Esther, severely, 'we must not stake all our happiness on one thing.'

'But I have so staked it,' I replied.

'Dear madam, you do not understand. If I get not Lord Chudleigh for my husband, I will never have any man. If I cannot be his slave, then will I be no man's queen. For oh! I love the ground he walks upon, the place where he lodges is my palace, his kind looks are my paradise; I want no heaven unless I can hold his hand in mine.'

I refrain from setting down all I said, because I think I was like a mad thing, having in my mind at once my overweening love, my repentance and shame, and my terror in thinking of what my lord would say when he heard the truth.

Had my case been that of more happy women, who have nothing to conceal or to confess, such a fit of passion would have been without excuse, but I set it down here, though with some shame, yet no self-reproach, because the events of the last day or two had been more than I could bear, and I must needs weep and cry, even though my tears and lamentations went to the heart of my gentle lady, who could not bear to see me suffer. For consider, the son of my kindest friends, to be lying, like to die, run through the body

by my lover: I could not be suffered to see his mother, who had been almost my own mother: I could never more bear to meet my pretty Nancy without thinking how, unwittingly, I had enchanted this poor boy, and so lured him to his death: that merry, saucy girl would be merry no more: all our ways of kindly mirth and innocent happiness were gone, never to return: even if Will recovered, how could there, any more, be friendship between him and me? For the memory of his villainous attempt could never be effaced. There are some things which we forgive, because we forget: but this thing, though I might forgive, none of us would ever forget. And at the back of all this trouble was my secret, which I was now, in some words, I knew not what, to confess to my lord.

Poor Mrs. Esther gave way to all I wanted. She would leave Epsom on Monday: indeed, her boxes should be packed in a couple of hours. She kissed and soothed me, while I wept and exclaimed, in terms which she could not understand, upon woman's perfidy and men's fond trust.

When I was recovered from this fit, which surely deserved no other name, in which passion got the better of reason, and reason and modesty were abandoned for the time (if Solomon Stallabras had seen me then, how would he have been ashamed for his blind infatuation!), we were able calmly to begin our preparation.

First we told Cicely to go order us a post-chaise for Monday morning, for we must go to London without delay; then I folded and packed away Mrs. Esther's things, and laid her down to rest awhile, for her spirits had been greatly agitated by my unreasonable behaviour. Then Cicely came to my room to help me, and presently I saw her tears falling upon the linen which she folded and laid in the trunk.

'Foolish Cicely!' I said, thinking of my own foolishness, 'why do you cry?'

'Oh, Miss Kitty,' she sobbed, 'who would not cry to see you going away, never to come back again? For I know you never, never could come here any more after that dreadful carrying away, enough to frighten a maid into her grave. And besides, they say that

Epsom is going to be given up, and the Assembly Rooms pulled down; and we should not have had this gay season unless it had been for my lord and his party at the Durdans. And what we shall do, mother and me, I can't even think.'

Why, here was another trouble.

'Miss Kitty'—this silly girl threw herself on her knees to me and caught my hand—'take me into your service when you marry my lord.'

'How do you know I am to marry my lord, Cicely? There are many things which may happen to prevent it.'

'Oh, I know you will, because you are so beautiful and so good.' I snatched my hand away. 'I haven't offended you, Miss Kitty, have I? All the world cries out that you are as good as you are beautiful; and haven't I seen you, for near two months, always considerate, and never out of temper with anybody, not even with me, or your hairdresser, or your dressmaker? Whereas, Miss Peggy Baker slaps her maid, and sticks pins into her milliner.'

'That is enough, Cicely,' I said. 'I have

no power to take anybody into my service, being as penniless as yourself. But if—if—that event *should* happen which you hope for —why—then—I do not—say——'

'It *will* happen. Oh, I know that it will happen. I have dreamed of it three times running, and always before midnight. I threw a piece of apple-peel yesterday, and called it to name your husband. It first made a G., which is Geoffrey, and then a C., which is Chudleigh. And mother says that everything in the house points to a wedding as true as she can read the signs. Oh! Miss Kitty, may I be in your service?'

I laughed and cried, I know not which, for the tears were very near my eyes all that time.

But oh! that thing did happen which she prophesied and I longed for—I will quickly tell you how. And, as I have said before, I took Cicely into my service, and a good and faithful maid she proved, and married the curate. I forgot to say that when young Lord Eardesley heard the story of his father's elopement with Jenny Medlicott, he laughed, because his mother, Jenny's friend and far-off

cousin, had taken her away to Virginia with her, where, after (I hope) the death of Joshua Crump, she had married again. Jenny, it appeared, was the daughter of the same alderman whose fall in 1720 ruined my poor ladies. And it was for this reason that his lordship afterwards, when Cicely had a houseful of babies, took a fancy to them, and would have them, when they were big enough, out to Virginia. Here he made them overseers, and, in course of time, settled them on estates of their own, where some of them prospered, and some, as happens in all large families, wasted their substance and fell into poverty.

The next day, being Sunday, we spent chiefly over our devotions. It was moving to hear the congregation invited to pray for one in grievous danger—meaning poor Will, who would have been better at this moment had he sometimes prayed for himself. Nancy sat beside me in our pew, and caught my hand at the words. One could not choose but weep, poor child! for there was no improvement in Will's fever: all night long the doctor had sat beside his bed, while the

lad, in his delirium, fancied himself riding races, wrestling, boxing, and drinking with his boon companions. A pitiful contrast! The pleasures of the world in his mind, and eternity in prospect. Yet, for a man in delirium, allowance must be made. The fever was now, in fact, at its height, and four men were necessary to hold him down in his ravings.

We spent a gloomy Sunday indeed, Mrs. Esther being so saddened by the anxieties of our friends that she resumed her reading of 'Drelincourt on Death,' a book she had laid aside since we left the Rules. And we observed a fast, not so much from religious motives, as because, in the words of Mrs. Esther, roast veal and stuffing is certain to disagree when a heart of sensibility is moved by the woes of those we love. In the evening we had it cold, when Nancy came to sit with us, her eyes red with her weeping, and we were fain to own that we were hungry after crying together all day long.

'Hot meat,' said Mrs. Esther, 'at such a juncture, would have choked us.'

Nancy said, that after what had happened,

it would certainly be impossible for us to stay longer at Epsom, and that for herself, all she hoped and expected now was shame and disgrace for the rest of her life. She wished that there were convents in the country to which she could repair for the rest of her days; go with her hair cut short, get up in the middle of the night for service, and eat nothing but bread and water, 'For,' she said, 'I shall never cease to think that my own brother tried to do such a wicked thing.'

Nancy as a nun made us all laugh, and so, with spirits raised a little, we kissed, and said farewell. Nancy promised to let me know every other day by post, whatever the letter should cost, how things went. It seemed to me, indeed, as if, seeing that Will had not died in the first twenty-four hours, the chance was somewhat in favour of his recovery. And he was so strong a man, and so young. I sent a message of duty and respect to Sir Robert—I dared not ask to have my name so much as mentioned to Will's mother—and left Nancy in her trouble, full of mine own.

Before we started next morning, Cicely went for news, but there was no improvement. The stable-boy, she told me, was going about the town, his arm bandaged up, saying that if ever a man was murdered in cold blood it was his master, because he had never a sword, and only a stick to defend himself with. Also, it was reported that among the lower classes, the servants, grooms, footmen, and such, the feeling was strong that the poor gentleman had met with foul play. Asked whether they understood rightly what Mr. Will Levett was doing, Cicely replied that they knew very well, and that they considered he was doing a fine and gallant thing, one which would confer as much honour upon the lady as upon himself, which shows that in this world there is no opinion too monstrous to be held by rough and uneducated people : wherefore we ought the more carefully to guard the constitution and prevent the rabble from having any share in public business, or the control of affairs.

Our carriage took us to London in three hours, the road being tolerably good, and so

well frequented, after the first three miles, that there was little fear of highway robbers or footpads. And so we came back to our lodgings in Red Lion Street, after such a two months as I believe never before fell to the lot of any girl.

Remember that I was a wife, yet a maiden; married to a man whom I had never seen except for a brief quarter of an hour, who knew not my name, and had never seen me at all—making allowance for the state of drunkenness in which he was married; that I knew this man's name, but he knew not mine; that I met him at Epsom, and that he had fallen in love with me, and I, God help me! with him. Yet that there was no way out of it, no escape but that before he could marry me (again) I must needs confess the deceit of which I had been guilty. No Heaven, say the Roman Catholics, without Purgatory. Yet suppose, after going through Purgatory, one were to miss one's Heaven!

How could I best go to my lord and tell him?

He was in hiding, in the Rules of the Fleet, and in our old lodging looking over

the Fleet Market by one window, and over Fleet Lane by the other—a pleasant lodging for so great a lord. Could I go down to him, in hoops and satin, to tell him in that squalid place the whole truth? Yet go I must.

Now, while we drove rapidly along the road, which is smooth and even between Epsom, or at least between Streatham and London, a thought came into my mind which wanted, after a little, nothing but the consent of Mrs. Esther. A dozen times was I upon the point of telling her all, and as many times did I refrain, because I reflected that, although she knew all about the carrying away of girls from the romances which she read, a secret marriage in the Fleet, although she had lived so long in the Rules, and even knew my uncle and thought him the greatest of men, was a thing outside her experience, and would therefore only terrify her and confuse her. Therefore I resolved to tell her no more than I was obliged.

But then my plans made it necessary that I should leave her for a while—two or three days, perhaps, or even more.

So soon, therefore, as we had unpacked

our trunks, and Mrs. Esther was seated in an arm-chair to rest after the fatigues of the rapid journey, I began upon the subject of getting away from her, hypocritically pleading my duty towards the Doctor, my uncle. I said that I thought I ought to pay him a visit, and that after my return to London he would certainly take it unkindly if I did not; that, considering the character of the place in which he unhappily resided, it was not to be thought that a person of Mrs. Esther's sensibility could be exposed to its rudeness; and that, with her permission, I would the next day take a coach, and, unless the Doctor detained me, I would return in the afternoon.

We had so firmly maintained our resolution to forget the past, that Mrs. Esther only smiled when I spoke of the rudeness of the market, and said that no doubt it was desirable for a gentlewoman to keep away from rude and unpolished people, so that the elevation of her mind might not be disturbed by unpleasant or harassing scenes. At the same time, she added, there were reasons, doubtless, why I should from time

to time seek out that great and good man (now in misfortune) to whom we all owed a debt of gratitude which never could be repaid. She therefore gave me permission to go there, it being understood that I was to be conveyed thither, and back again, in a coach.

In the morning, after breakfast, I dressed myself for the journey, and, because I thought it likely that I might remain for one night at least, and perhaps more, I took with me a bag containing my oldest and poorest clothes, those, namely, in which I was dressed while in the market. Then I wrapped myself in a hood which I could pull, if necessary, over my face, and, so disguised, I stole down the stairs.

London streets are safe for a young woman in the morning, when the throng of people to and fro keeps rogues honest. I walked through Fetter Lane, remembering that here Solomon Stallabras was born — indeed, I passed a little shop over which the name was painted on a swinging sign of the Silver Garter, so that one of his relatives still carried on the business. Then I walked along Fleet Street,

crowded with chairs, carriages, waggons, and porters. The Templars were lounging about the gates of their Inns; the windows of the many vintners' houses were wide open, and within them were gentlemen drinking wine, early as it was; the coffee-houses were full of tradesmen who would have been better at home behind their counters; ladies were crowding into the shops, having things turned over for them; 'prentices jostled each other behind the posts; grave gentlemen walked slowly along, carrying their canes before them, like wands of office; swaggering young fellows took the wall of everyone, except of each other; the street was full of the shouting, noise, and quarrelling which I remembered so well. At the end was the bridge with its quacks bawling their wares which they warranted to cure everything, and its women selling hot furmety, oysters, and fish. Beyond the bridge rose before me the old gate of Lud, which has since been pulled down, and on the left was the Fleet Market, at sight of which, as of an old friend, I could have burst into tears.

The touters and runners for the Fleet

parsons were driving their trade as merrily as ever. Among them I recognised my old friend Roger, who did not see me. By the blackness of one eye, and the brown paper sticking to his forehead, one could guess that competition among the brethren of his craft had been more than usually severe of late.

Prosperity, I thought to myself, works speedy changes with us. Was it really possible that I had spent six long months and more in this stinking, noisy, and intolerable place? Why, could I have had one moment of happiness when not only was I surrounded by infamy in every shape, but I had no hope or prospect of being rescued? In eight short months these things had grown to seem impossible. Death itself, I thought, would be preferable to living among such people and in the midst of such scenes.

I recognised them all: it gave me pain to feel how familiar they were: the mean, scowling faces, stamped with the seal of wicked lives and wicked thoughts—such faces must those souls wear who are lost beyond redemption: and the deformed men and boys who seemed to select this market as their favourite

haunt. There are many more deformed among the poor than with the better sort, by reason of the accidents which befall their neglected children and maim them for life. That would account for the presence of many of these monsters, but not of all ; I suppose some of them come to the market because the labour of handling and carrying the fruit and vegetables is light, though poorly paid.

There were hunchbacks in great plenty ; those whose feet were clubbed, whose legs were knock-kneed, whose feet were turned inward, whose eyes squinted. I looked about me for —but did not see—a certain dreadful woman whom I remembered, who sold shell-fish at a stall and had fingers webbed like a duck ; but there was the other dreadful woman still in her place, whose upper lip was horrid to look at for hair ; there was the cobbler who refused to shave because he said it was unscriptural, and so sat like one of the ancients with a long white beard ; there were, alas ! the little children, pale, hungry-looking, with eager, sharp eyes, in training for the whip, the gallows, or the plantation. They ran about among the baskets ; they sat or stood among

the stalls waiting for odd jobs, messages and parcels to carry; they prowled about looking for a chance to steal: it was all as I remembered it, yet had forgotten so quickly. On the right the long wall of the Fleet Prison; beyond that, the doctor's house, his name painted on the door. I pulled my hood closer over my face and passed it by, because before paying my respects to my uncle I was going to make inquiries about the man I loved.

He was, as I knew, in our old lodgings. He slept, unconscious, in my room; he sat where I had so often sat; the place ought to have reminded him of me. But he knew nothing; the name of Kitty Pleydell was not yet associated in his mind with the Rules of the Fleet.

When we went away, one of those who bade us God-speed and shed tears over our departure was Mrs. Dunquerque, who, as I have told, lived above us with her husband, Captain Dunquerque, and her two little girls. The captain, who was not a good man or a kind man, drank and gambled when he got any money, and left his poor wife and

children to starve. It was to her that I meant to go. She was a kind-hearted woman, and fond of me for certain favours I had been able to show her little girls. I was sure to find her in the same lodgings, because in the Rules no one ever changes.

I came to the house: I pulled the hood so close about my face that had my lord met me he would not have known me. The door was standing wide open, as usual. I entered and mounted the stairs. The door of the room —our old room, on the first-floor—was half open. Within—oh, my heart!—I saw my lord sitting at the table, with paper before him, pen in hand. I dared not wait, lest he might discover me, but hastened upstairs to Mrs. Dunquerque's room.

I was fortunate enough to find her at home. The captain was gone abroad, and had taken the children with him for a morning's walk. She sat at home, as usual, darning, mending, and making. But oh! the cry of pleasure and surprise when she saw me, and the kisses she gave me, and the praise at my appearance, and the questions after Mrs. Esther! I told her of all, including Sir Miles Lacking-

ton and Solomon Stallabras's good fortune. Then she began to tell me of herself. They were as poor as when we went away; but their circumstances had improved in one important particular; for though the captain was no more considerate (as I guessed from a word she dropped), and drank and gambled whenever he could, they had a friend who sent them without fail what was more useful to them than money—food and clothes for the children and their mother. She did not know who the friend was, but the supplies never failed, being as regular as those brought by the prophet's ravens.

I did not need to be told the name of this friend, for, in truth, I had myself begged the doctor to extend his charity to this poor family, and asked him to send them beef and pudding, which the children could eat, rather than money, which the captain would drink. This he promised to do. Truly, charity, in his case, ought to have covered a multitude of sins, for he had a hand ever open to give, and a heart to pity; moreover, he gave in secret, and never did his right hand know what his left hand was doing.

Then I opened my business to Mrs. Dunquerque, but only partially.

I told her that on the first-floor, in the rooms formerly occupied by ourselves, there was now a young gentleman, well known to Sir Miles Lackington, who had reason to be out of sight for a short time; that he was also known to myself—here I blushed, and my friend nodded and laughed, being interested, as all women are, in the discovery of a love secret; that I was anxious for his welfare; that I had made the excuse of paying a visit to the Doctor in order to be near him: that, in fact, I would be about him, wait upon him, and watch over him, without his knowledge of my presence.

'But he will most certainly know thee, child,' she cried. 'Tell me, my dear, is he in love with thee?'

'He says so,' I replied. 'Perhaps he tells the truth.'

'And you? Oh, Kitty, to think of you only a year ago!'

'There is no doubt about me,' I said; 'for, oh! dear Mrs. Dunquerque, I am head over ears in love with him. Yet I will so

contrive that he shall not know me, if you will help.'

'And what can I do?'

'Make his acquaintance; go and see him; tell him that he must want some one to do for him; offer to send him your maid Phœbe —yes, Phœbe. Then I will go, and, if he speaks to me, which is not likely, I will answer in a feigned voice. Go, now, Mrs. Dunquerque. I will dress for Phœbe.'

She laughed and went away.

My lord lifted his head as she knocked at the door.

'I ask your pardon, sir,' she said, 'for this intrusion. I live above you, upon the second-floor, with my husband and children. I suppose, sir, that, like the rest of us in this place, you come here because you cannot help it, and a pity it is to find so young a gentleman thus early shipwrecked.'

'I thank you, madam,' said my lord, bowing, 'for this goodwill.'

'The will is nothing, sir, because people in misfortune ought to help each other when they can. Therefore, sir, and because I perceive that your room is not what a gentle-

man's should be, being inch thick with dust, I will, with your permission, send down my maid when you go out, who may make you clean and tidy.'

'I shall not go out,' replied my lord; 'but I thank you for the offer of the girl. I dare say the place might be cleaner.'

'She is a girl, sir,' replied Mrs. Dunquerque, 'who will not disturb you by any idle chatter. Phœbe!' Here she stepped out upon the stairs. 'Phœbe! Come downstairs this minute, and bring a duster.'

When Phœbe came, she was a girl whose hair was pulled over her eyes, and she had the corner of her apron in her mouth; she wore a brown stuff frock, not down to her ankles; her hands were whiter than is generally found in a servant; her apron was of the kind which servant-maids use to protect their frocks, and she wore a great cap tied under the chin and awry, as happens to maids in the course of their work; in one respect, beside her hands, Phœbe was different from the ordinary run of maidservants—her shoes and stockings were so fine that she feared his lordship would notice them.

But he noticed her not at all—neither shoes, nor hands, nor cap, nor apron, which, though it was foolish, made this servant-girl feel a little pained.

'Phœbe,' said Mrs. Dunquerque, 'you will wait upon this gentleman, and fetch him what he wants. And now do but look at the dust everywhere. Saw one ever such untidiness? Quick, girl, with the duster, and make things clean. Dear me! to think of this poor gentleman sitting up to his eyes, as one may say, in a peck of dust!'

She stood in the room, with her work in her hand, rattling on about the furniture and the fineness of the day, and the brightness of the room, which had two windows, and the noise of the market, which, she said, the young gentleman would mind, more than nothing at all, after a while. As for the dreadful language of the porters and fish-wives, that, she said, was not pleasant at first, but after a little one got, so to say, used to it, and you no more expected that one of these wretches should speak without breaking the third commandment and shocking ears used to words of purity and piety,

than you would expect his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury himself to use the language of the market. She advised the young gentleman, further, for his own good, not to sit alone and mope, but to go abroad and ruffle it with the rest, to keep a stout heart, to remember that Fortune frowns one day and smiles the next, being a deity quite capricious and untrustworthy; therefore that it behoved a young man to have hope; and she exhorted him in this end to seek out cheerful company, such as that of the great Doctor Shovel, the only Chaplain of the Fleet, as learned as a bishop and as merry as a monk: or even to repair to the prison and play tennis and racquets with the gentlemen therein confined: but, above all, not to sit alone and brood. Why, had he never a sweetheart to whom he could write and send sweet words of love, whereby the heart of the poor thing would be lightened and her affections fixed?

So she rattled on, while I, nothing loth, plied duster, and cleaned up furniture with a zeal surpassing that of any housemaid. Yet, because men never observe what is under

their eyes, he observed nothing of all this activity. If I had crawled as slowly as possible over the work, it would have been all one to him.

Presently I came to the table at which he was sitting. This, too, was covered with dust. (It had been our table formerly, and had grown old in the service of the Pimpernel ladies.) I brushed away the dust with great care, and, in so doing, I saw that he had a letter before him, just begun. It commenced with these enchanting words :

'Love of my soul ! My goddess Kitty——'

Oh that I could have fallen at his feet, then and there, and told him all ! But I could not ; I was afraid.

He had, as yet, written nothing more. But on a piece of paper beside the letter he had traced the outlines of a woman's head. Whose head should it be, I ask you, but Kitty's ?

I was amazed at the sight. My colour came and went.

'Phœbe,' cried Mrs. Dunquerque, warningly, 'be careful how you touch the papers ! There, sir, we have your room straight for

you. It looks a little cleaner than it did awhile since.'

'Surely,' he replied, without looking around. 'Yes, I am truly obliged to you, madam. As for this girl'—still he would not look at me—'perhaps——'

He placed a whole crown-piece in my hand. A crown-piece for such a simple piece of work! Enough to make the best of housemaids grasping! This is how men spoil servants.

'Can I get you anything, sir?' I asked, in a feigned voice.

'Nothing, child, nothing. Stay—yes. One must eat a little, sometimes. Get me some dinner by-and-by.'

This was all for that time. We went away, and we spent the rest of the morning in making him such a little dinner as we thought must please him. First we got from the market a breast of veal, which we roasted with a little stuffing, and dished with a slice or two of bacon, nicely broiled, some melted butter made with care, and a lemon. This, to my mind, forms a dish fit for a prince. We added to this some haricot beans, with butter

and sweet herbs, and a dish of young potatoes. Then we made a little fruit pudding and a custard, nicely browned, and, at two o'clock, put all upon a tray, and I carried it downstairs, still with my hair over my eyes, my cap still awry, and the corner of the apron still in my teeth.

I set the food before him and waited to serve him. But he would not let me.

Ah! had he known how I longed to do something for him, and what a happiness it was simply to make his dinner, to prepare his vegetables for him, and to boil his pudding! But how should he guess?

I found Sir Miles's bottle of wine untouched in the cupboard, and placed it on the table. Then I left him to his meal. When I returned, I found he had eaten next to nothing. One could have cried with vexation.

'Lord, sir,' I said, still in my feigned voice, 'if you do not eat you will be ill. Is there never a body that loves you?'

He started, but hardly looked at me.

'A trick of voice,' he said. 'Yet it reminded me— Is there anybody who loves

me, child? I think there is. To be sure, there is some one whom I love.'

'Then, sir, you ought to eat, if only to please her, by keeping well and strong.'

'Well, well! I dare say I shall be hungry to-morrow. You can take away the things, Phœbe, if that is what they call you.'

I could say no more, but was fain to obey. Then, as I could do no more for him, I took up the tray and resolved to go and see the Doctor, with whom I had much to say. Therefore I put off my servant's garb, with the apron and cap, and drew the hood over my face again.

The Doctor's busy time was in the morning. In the afternoon, after dinner, he mostly slept in his arm-chair, over a pipe of tobacco. I found him alone thus enjoying himself. I know not whether he slept or meditated, for the tobacco was still burning, though his eyes were closed.

There is this peculiarity about noise in London, that people who live in it and sleep in it, do not notice it. Thus while there was a horrible altercation outside his very windows—a thing which happened every day,

and all day long—the Doctor regarded it not at all. Yet he heard me open and shut the door, and was awake instantly.

'Kitty!' he cried. 'Why, child, what dost thou here?'

'I hope, sir,' I said, 'that I find you in good health and spirits.'

'Reasonable good, Kitty. A man of my years, be he never so temperate and regular in his habits, finds the slow tooth of time gnawing upon him. Let me look at thy face. Humph! one would say that the air of Epsom is good for young maids' cheeks. But why in Fleet Market, child?'

'Partly, sir, I came to see you, and partly——'

'To see some one else, of whose lodging in the Rules I have been told by Sir Miles Lackington. Tell me—the young man whom he wounded, is he dead?'

'Nay, sir, not dead, but grievously wounded, and in a high fever.'

'So. A man in early manhood, who has been wounded by a sword running through his vitals, who four days after the event is still living, though in a high fever—that man,

methinks, is likely to recover, unless his physician, as is generally the case, is an ass. For, my dear, there are as many incompetent physicians as there are incapable preachers. Their name is Legion. Well, Kitty, you came about Lord Chudleigh. Have you seen him?'

'Yes; but, sir, he does not know that I am here. I saw him'—here I blushed again—'in disguise as a housemaid.'

'Ho! ho! ho!' laughed the Doctor. 'Why, girl, thou hast more spirit than I gave thee credit for. Thou deservest him, and shalt have him, too. The time is come.' He rose and folded his gown about him, and put on his wig, which for coolness' sake he had laid aside. 'I will go to him and say, "Mylord, the person to whom you were married is no other than——"'

'Oh! no, sir. I pray you do not speak to him in such fashion. Pray hear me first.'

'Well—well. Let us hear this little baggage.' The Doctor was in very good spirits, and eager to unfold his tale. He sat down again, however, and took up his pipe. 'Go on, then, Kitty; go on—I am listening.'

This was, indeed, a very critical moment of

my life. For on this moment depended, I foresaw, all my happiness. I therefore hesitated a little, thinking what to say and how to say it. Then I began.

I reminded my uncle that, when I first came under his protection, I was a young girl fresh from the country, who knew but little evil, suspected none, and in all things had been taught to respect and fear my betters. I then reminded him how, while in this discipline of mind, I was one morning called away by him, and ordered to go through a certain form which (granting that I well knew it to be the English form of marriage service) I could not really believe to mean that I was married. And though my uncle assured me afterwards that such was the case, I so little comprehended that it could be possible, that I had almost forgotten the whole event. Then, I said, we had gone away from the Rules of the Fleet, and found ourselves under happier circumstances, where new duties made me still more forget this strange thing. Presently we went to Epsom, whither, in the strangest way, repaired the very man I had married.

After this, I told him, the most wonderful thing in the world happened to me. For not only did my lord fall in love with me, his legal wife, but he gave me to understand that the only obstacle to his marrying me was that business in the Fleet, of which he informed me at length.

'Very good,' said the Doctor. 'Things could not go better. If the man has fallen in love with the girl, he ought to be pleased that she is his wife.'

Nay: that would not do either; for here another thing of which the Doctor had no experience, being a man. For when a woman falls in love with a man she must needs make herself as virtuous and pure in mind as she is brave in her dress, in order the more to please him and fix his affection. And what sort of love would that be where a woman should glory, as it were, in deception?

Why, his love would be changed, if not into loathing, then into a lower kind of love, in which admiration of a woman's beauty forms the whole part. Now, if beauty is everything, even Helen of Troy would be a

miserable woman, a month after marriage, when her husband would grow tired of her.

'Alas!' I cried, 'I love him. If you tell him, as he must now be told, that I was the woman who took a part in that shameful business—yes, sir, even to your face I must needs call it shameful—you may tell him at once that I release him so far as I can. I will not acknowledge the marriage. I will go into no court of law, nor will I give any evidence to establish my rights——'

'Whom God hath joined asunder——' the Doctor began.

'Oh! I know—I know. And you are a clergyman of the Church, with power and authority by laying on of hands. Yet I cannot think, I cannot feel that any blessing of heaven could rest upon a union performed in such a place. Is this room, nightly desecrated by revellers, a church? Is your profligate wretch Roger a clerk? Where were the banns put up? What bells were rung?'

'Banns are no longer fashionable,' he replied. 'But let me think.' He was not angry with my plainness of speech, but rather

the contrary. 'Let me think.' He went to his cupboard, took out his great register, and turned over the leaves. Ay! here it is, having a page to itself: Geoffrey Lord Chudleigh to Catherine Pleydell. Your ladyship is as truly Lady Chudleigh as his mother was before him. But if you *will* give up that title and dignity'—here he smiled and tore out the page, but carefully—'I will not baulk thee, child. Here is the register, and here the certificate of the wedding.' He put both together, and laid them carefully aside. 'Come to me to-morrow, and I will then go with you to his lordship and give him these papers to deal with as he pleases.'

CHAPTER THE LAST.

HOW LORD CHUDLEIGH RECEIVED HIS FREEDOM.

I RETURNED to my lodging, there to await the event of the next morning. My lord would learn that he was free—so far good. But with his freedom would come the news that the woman who restored it to him was the same who had taken it away, and the same whom he had professed to love. Alas! poor Kitty!

Now was I like unto a man sentenced to death, yet allowed to choose the form of his execution, whether he would be hanged, poisoned, beheaded, stabbed, shot, drowned, or pushed violently and suddenly out of life in some other manner which he might prefer. As the time approaches, his anxiety grows the greater until the fatal moment arrives

when he must choose at once; then, in trouble and confusion, he very likely chooses that very method which is most painful in the contemplation and the endurance. So with me. I might choose the manner of telling my lover all, but tell him I must. 'Pray Heaven,' I said, 'to direct me into the best way.' In the afternoon I became once more Phœbe.

Phœbe carried a dish of tea; would the gentleman choose to taste it? He took it from Phœbe's hand, drank it, and returned to his writing, which was, I believe, a continuation of that letter, the commencement of which I had seen.

In the evening Sir Miles paid him a visit of consolation. He drank up what was left of the bottle, and, after staying an hour or so, went away, noisily promising himself a jovial night with the Doctor.

At eight o'clock Phœbe brought a tray with cold meat upon it, but my lord would take none, only bidding her to set it down and leave him.

'Can I do nothing more for you, sir?' asked the maid.

He started again.

'Your voice, child,' he said (although I had disguised my voice), 'reminds of one whose voice——'

'La, sir!' she asked. 'Is it the voice of your sweetheart?'

He only sighed and sat down again. Phœbe lingered as long as she could, and then she went away.

Then we all went to bed. Captain Dunquerque had by this time brought home the little girls and gone to the Doctor's, where, with Sir Miles and the rest, he was making a night of it.

It was a hot night; the window was open; the noise of the brawling and fighting below was intolerable; the smell from the market was worse than anything I remembered, and the bed was a strange one. Added to all this, my cares were so great that I could not sleep. Presently I arose and looked out, just as I had done a year before when first I came to my uncle for protection. Everything was the same; there was light enough to see the groups of those who talked and the forms of those who slept. I remembered

the old and the young, as I had seen them in the bright light of a July dawn: poor wretches, destined from their birth to be soldiers of the devil; elected for disgrace and shame; born for Newgate and Bridewell; brought into the world for the whipping-post, the cart-tail, and the gallows. Just the same; and I alone changed. For beneath me, all unconscious, was one whom I might call my husband. Then my thoughts went wholly out to him; then I could neither sit nor rest, nor stand still with thinking of the next day, and what I had to say and how to say it. Oh, my love—my dear—could I bear to give him up? could I bear to see him turn away those eyes which had never looked upon me save with kindness and affection? Could I endure to think that his love was gone from me altogether? Death was better, if death would come.

Then, crazed, I think, with trouble, I crept slowly from the room, and went down the stair till I reached the door of the room where my lord was lying. And here I went on like a mad thing, having just enough sense to keep silence, yet weeping without

restraint, wringing my hands, praying, offering to Heaven the sacrifice of my life, if only my lover would not harden his heart to me, and kissing the while the very senseless wood of the door.

Within the room he was sleeping unconscious; without I was silently crying and weeping, full of shame and anxiety, not daring to hope, yet knowing full well his noble heart. Why, had I, weeks before, dared to tell him all, forgiveness would have been mine; I knew it well. Yet now, in such a place, when he was reminded of the companions, or at least the creatures, who had surrounded her, would he not harden his heart and refuse to believe that any virtue, any purity could survive?

All this was of no avail. When I was calmed a little I returned to my own room and sat upon the bed, wondering whether any woman was so miserable in her shame as myself.

The long minutes crept on slowly: the daylight was dawning: the night had passed away: Captain Dunquerque had rolled up the stairs noisily, singing a drunken song: the

revellers below were quiet, but the morning carts had begun when I fell asleep for weariness, and when I awoke the sun was high. So I arose, dressed, and hastened downstairs, hoping to see the Doctor before he sallied forth.

There had been, Roger told me with a smile, a great night. He meant that the Doctor's guests had been many, and their calls for punch numerous. Sir Miles had been carried away to some place in the neighbourhood. The Doctor was still abed.

While we talked he appeared, no whit the worse for his night's potations. Yet I thought his face was of a deeper purple than of old, and his neck thicker. That was very likely an idle fancy, because a few months could make but little difference in a man of his fixed habits.

'Well, Kitty'—he was in good humour, and apparently satisfied with the position of things—'I have thought over thy discourse of yesterday, which, I confess, greatly moved me: first, because I did not know thee to be a girl of such spirit, courage, and dignity; and second, because I now perceive that the

marriage, performed in thy interest, was perhaps, as things have now turned out (which is surely providential), a mistake. Yet was it done for the best, and I repent me not. Come, then, to my lord, and let me talk to him.'

'First, sir,' I begged, 'tell him not my name.'

He promised this; though, as he said, the name was on the register; and it was agreed between us that he should speak to my lord privately, and then that he was to call me, when I should play my part as best I could.

The Doctor led the way. When he entered the room I ran upstairs, and with trembling hands made myself as fine as I could; that is, I was but in morning dishabille, but I dressed my hair, and put those little touches to my frock and ribbons which every woman understands. And then I put on my hood, which I pulled quite over my face, and waited.

My lord rose angrily when he saw the Doctor.

'Sir,' he said, 'this visit is an intrusion. I have no business with you; I do not desire to see you. Leave the room immediately!'

'First,' said Dr. Shovel, 'I have business with your lordship.'

'I can have no business with you,' replied Lord Chudleigh. 'I have already had too much business with you. Go, sir: your intrusion is an insult.'

'Dear, dear!' the Doctor replied. 'This it is to be young and hot-headed and to jump at conclusions. Whereas, did the young gentleman know the things I have to say, he would welcome me with open arms.'

'You come, I suppose, to remind me of a thing of which you ought to be truly ashamed, so wicked was it.'

'Nay, nay; not so wicked as your lordship thinks.' The Doctor would not be put out of temper. 'What a benefactor is he who makes young people happy, with the blessing of the Church!'

'I cannot, I suppose, use violence to this man,' said the other. 'He is a clergyman, and, for the sake of his cloth, must be tolerated. Would you kindly, sir, proceed at once to the business you have in hand and then begone? If you come to laugh over the misfortune caused by yourself, laugh and

go your way. If you come for money for the wretched accomplice in your conspiracy, ask it and go. In any case, sir, make haste.'

'My lord,' the Doctor replied, 'I am a messenger—from one who conceives that she hath done you grievous wrong, is very sorry for the past, which she alone can undo, and begs your forgiveness.'

'Who is that person, then?' His curiosity was roused, and he waited in patience to hear what the Doctor might have to say.

'It is, my lord, the lady who may, if she chooses, call herself your wife.'

My lord stood confused.

'Does she wish to see me?'

'She wishes to place in your hands'—here the Doctor's voice became deeper and more musical, like the low notes of a great organ —'the proofs of her marriage with you. Does your lordship comprehend? She will stand before you, bringing with her the only papers which exist to prove the fact. She will put them in your own hands, if you wish; she will destroy them before your eyes if you wish; and she will then retire from your presence,

and you shall never know, unless you wish it, the name of the woman you married.'

'But . . . This is wonderful. . . . How shall I know that the papers are the only proof of the ceremony?'

'Your lordship has my word—my word of a Christian priest. I break the laws of God and of man daily. I am, however, a sinner who still guards those rags and tatters of a conscience which most sinners hasten to throw away—wherefore must my repentance be some day greater. Yet, my lord, my word I never brake, nor ever looked to hear it questioned. You shall have all the proofs. You shall be free, if you please, from this moment. You shall never be molested, reproached, threatened, or reminded of the past.'

'Free!' my lord repeated, looking the Doctor in the face. 'I cannot but believe sir, what you solemnly aver to be the truth. Yet what am I to think of this generosity? how interpret it? By what acts have I deserved it? What am I to do in return? Is there any pitfall or snare for me?'

'In return, you will grant her your for-

giveness. That is a pitfall, if you please. You will also expect a surprise.'

'Strange!' said Lord Chudleigh. 'Kitty asked me, too, to forgive this woman. My forgiveness! Does she ask for no money?'

'My lord, you are utterly deceived in your belief as to this woman and her conduct. By your leave I will tell you the exact truth.

'You know, because I told you, that the wrong inflicted upon me by your father was my justification, from a worldly point of view, for the advantage which I took of your condition. You think, I suppose, that some miserable drab was brought in from the market to play the part of dummy-wife, and threaten you and persecute you for money. You are wrong.

'There was living in this place at the time, with a lady of ruined fortunes, a young woman of gentle birth (by her father's side), though penniless. She was beautiful exceedingly, well educated, a God-fearing damsel, and a good girl. By her mother's side she was my niece, that branch of her family being of obscure origin. On the death of her father she became for a time my ward, which

was the reason why she lived here—no fit place for a girl of good reputation, I own, though at the time I could do no better for her. She was not only all that I have described her in appearance, carriage, and virtues, but she was, as well, very much afraid of me, her guardian. She had been brought up to obey without questioning her spiritual pastors and masters and all who might be placed in authority over her. This girl it was whom you married.'

The Doctor paused, to let his words have due effect.

'When I designed the treachery, you being then sound asleep, it first seemed to me that the fitting person for such a revenge as I at first proposed to myself would be one of those women who are confined to the Fleet for life, unless by hook or crook they can get them a husband. Such a one I sent for. I did not disclose the name of the man I proposed, because I found her only too eager to marry anyone upon whom she could saddle her debts, and so make him either pay them or change places with her. But while I talked with the woman I thought how

cruel a thing it would be for your lordship to be mated with such a wife, and I resolved, if I did give you a wife against your knowledge, that she should be worthy to bear your name. Accordingly I despatched this person, who is still, I suppose, languishing in the prison hard by, and sent for the young lady.

'She came unsuspiciously. I told her, with a frown which made her tremble, that she was to obey me in all that I ordered her to do; and I bade her, then, take her place at the table, and repeat such words as I should command. She obeyed. Your lordship knows the rest.'

'But she knew—she must have known—that she was actually married?'

'She could not understand. She had seen marriages performed; but then it was in a church, with regular forms. She did not know until I told her. Besides, I ordered her; and, had my command been to throw herself from a high tower, she would have obeyed. She was not yet seventeen; she was country-bred, and she was innocence itself.'

'Poor child!' said my lord.

'She has left the Rules of the Fleet for some time. She knows that at any time she might claim the name and the honours of your wife, but she has refrained, though she has had hundreds of opportunities. Now, however, she declares that she will be no longer a party to the conspiracy, and she is desirous of restoring, into your own hands, the papers of the marriage. Will your lordship, first, forgive her?'

'Tell her,' said my lord, 'that I forgive her freely. Where is she?'

'She waits without.'

Then he called me, but not by name.

My knees trembled and shook beneath me as I rose, pulled the hood tighter over my face, and followed the Doctor into the room. In my hand I held the papers.

'This,' said the Doctor, 'is the young gentlewoman of whom we spoke. The papers are in her hands. Child, give his lordship the papers.'

I held them out, and he took them. All this time he never ceased gazing at me; but he could see nothing, not even my eyes.

'Are we playing a comedy?' he asked. 'Dr. Shovel, are we dreaming, all of us?'

'Everything, my lord, is real. You hold in your hands the certificate of marriage and the register. Not copies—the actual documents. Before you read the papers and learn the lady's name, tell her, in my hearing, that you forgive her. She bids me tell you, for her, that since she learned the thing that she had done, what it meant, and whose happiness it threatened, she has had no happy day.'

'Forgiveness!' said my lord, in a voice strangely moved, while his eyes softened. 'Forgiveness, madam, is a poor word to express what I feel in return for this most generous deed. It is a thing for which I can find no words sufficient to let you know how great is my gratitude. Learn, madam, that my heart is bestowed upon a woman whose perfections, to my mind, are such that no man is worthy of her; but she hath graciously been pleased to accept and even to return my affection. Now by this act, because I cannot think that we are bound together in the eyes

of the Church by that form of marriage service——'

'It is a question,' said the Doctor, 'which it would task the learning of the whole country to decide. By ecclesiastical law—But let us leave this question unconsidered. Nothing need ever be said about the matter. Your lordship is free.'

'Then'—he still held the papers in his hand, and seemed in no way anxious to satisfy his curiosity as to the name of the woman who had caused so much anxiety—'before we part, perhaps never to meet again, may I ask to be allowed to see the face of the lady who has performed this wonderful act of generosity?'

I trembled, but made no answer.

'Stay a moment,' he said. 'Remember that you have given up a goodly estate, with a large fortune and an ancient name—things which all women rightly prize. These things you have given away. Do you repent?'

I shook my head.

'Then let me never know'—he tore the papers into a thousand fragments—'let me never know the name of the woman to whom

I owe this gift. Let me think of her as of an angel!'

The Doctor took me by the arm as if to lead me away.

'Since you do not want to know her name, my lord, I do not see any reason why you should. Let us go, child.'

'May I only see her face?' he asked.

'Come, child,' urged the Doctor; 'come away. There is no need, my lord.'

But those words about myself, his nobleness, had touched me to the heart. I could deceive him no longer. I threw back the hood, put up my hands to my face, and fell at his feet, crying and sobbing.

'It is I, my lord! It was Kitty Pleydell herself—the woman whom you thought so good. Oh, forgive me! forgive me! Have pity!'

Now I seem to have no words to tell how he raised me in his strong arms, how he held me by the waist and kissed me, crying that indeed there was nothing in his heart towards me but love and tenderness.

Would it not be a sin to write down those words of love and endearment with which,

when the Doctor left us alone, he consoled and soothed me? I hid nothing from him. I told him how I had well-nigh forgotten the dreadful thing I had done until I saw him again at the Assembly; how from day to day my conscience smote me more and more, and yet I dared not tell him all—for fear of losing his respect.

Let us pass this over.

The story of Kitty is nearly told.

We forgot all about poor Will and the reason why my lord should for a while lie close. We agreed that we would be married, quietly, in due form, and of course at church, as soon as arrangements could be made. And then nothing would do but my lord must carry me to Mrs. Esther, and formally ask her permission to the engagement.

You may think how happy was I to step into the coach which brought me back to my dear lady, with such a companion.

He led me into her presence with a stately bow.

'Madam,' he said, 'I have the honour to ask your permission to take the hand of your ward, Miss Kitty, who hath been pleased to

lend a favourable ear to my proposals. Be assured, dear madam, that we have seriously weighed and considered the gravity of the step which we propose to take, and the inclination of our hearts. And I beg you, madam, to believe that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to making this dear girl as happy as it is in the power of one human creature to make another.'

Mrs. Esther was perfectly equal to the proper ceremonies demanded for the occasion, although, as she confessed, she was a great deal surprised at the suddenness of the thing, which, notwithstanding that she had expected it for many weeks, came upon her with a shock. She said that his lordship's proposal was one which the world would no doubt consider a great condescension, seeing that her dear Kitty, though of good family, had no other prospects than the inheritance of the few hundreds which made her own income: but, for her own part, knowing this child as she did—and here she spoke in terms of unmerited praise of beauty and goodness and

such qualities as I could lay but small claim to possess, yet resolved to aim at them.

Finally, she held out her own hand to his lordship, saying :

'Therefore, my lord, as I consider Kitty my daughter, so henceforth will I consider you my son. And may God keep and bless you both, and give you all that the heart of a good man may desire, with children good and dutiful, long and peaceful lives, and in the end, to sit together for ever in happy heaven.'

Whereupon she wept, falling on my neck.

Now, while we were thus weeping and crying, came Sir Miles, who immediately guessed the cause, and wished my lord joy, shaking him by the hand. Thus he must needs kiss my hand.

'The Doctor,' he explained, 'told me where I should most likely find you. The Doctor's knowledge of the human heart is most extensive. I would I had the Doctor's head for punch. My lord, this is a lucky day. Will Levett is out of his fever, and hath signed a

written confession that your sword was drawn in self-defence, and that had he not been run through, his cudgel would have beaten out your brains. Therefore there is no more to keep us in hiding, and we may go about joyfully and in the open, as gentlemen should. And as for Will, he may die or live, as seemeth him best.'

'Nay, Sir Miles,' I said. 'Pray that the poor lad live and lead a better life.'

This is the story of Kitty Pleydell: how she came to London, and lived in the Rules of the Fleet: how she was made to go through the form of a marriage: how she left the dreadful noisy, wicked place: how she went to Epsom: how Lord Chudleigh fell in love with her, to her unspeakable happiness; and how she told him her great secret. The rest, which is the history of a great and noble man married to a wife whose weakness was guided and led by him in the paths of virtue, discretion and godliness, cannot be told.

I have told what befell some of the actors

in this story—Solomon Stallabras, I have explained, married the brewer's widow: Will Levett recovered and did not repent, but lived a worse life after his narrow escape than before. As for the rest, Mrs. Esther remained with us, either at Chudleigh Court or our town house: Harry Temple was wise enough to give up pining after what he could not get, and married Nancy, so that she, too, had her heart's desire: Sir Miles went on alternately gaming and drinking, till he died of an apoplexy at forty.

There remains to be told the fate of the Chaplain of the Fleet. When they passed the Marriage Act of 1753, the Fleet weddings were suddenly stopped. They had been a scandal to the town for more than forty years, so that it was high time they should be ended. But when the end actually came, the Doctor, who had saved no money, was penniless. Nor could he earn money in any way whatever, nor had he any friends, although there were hundreds of grateful hearts among the poor creatures around

him, who could contribute to his support except ourselves.

Mrs. Esther, on learning his sad condition, instantly wrote to offer him half her income. My husband, for his part, sent a lawyer among his creditors, found out for what sum he could effect a release, paid this money, which was no great amount, and sent him his discharge. Then, because the Doctor would have been unhappy out of London, he made him a weekly allowance of five guineas, reckoning that he would live on one guinea, drink two guineas, and give away two. He lived to enjoy this allowance for ten years more, going every night to a coffee-house, where he met his friends, drank punch, told stories, sang songs, and was the oracle of the company. He took great pride in the position which he had once occupied in the Rules of the Fleet, and was never tired of boasting how many couples he had made into man and wife.

I know that his life was disreputable and his pleasures coarse, yet when I think of the Doctor and his many acts of kindness and

charity, I remember certain texts, and I think we have reasonable ground for a Christian's hope as regards his deathbed repentance, which was as sincere as it was edifying.

THE END.

PRINTED BY BILLING AND SONS.

BOUND BY

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 041401073